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Building an economy of love

Mark Anielski

Our economy has cancer, represented by a mountain of debt-based money that can never be repaid despite the more we produce and the more we consume. Our lives are literally *mort-gaged*; in French, mortgage means "a death pledge." For each dollar a Canadian spends at Tim Hortons, about 42 cents symbolizes the cost of interest payments on a mortgage, business or farm loan, student loan, credit card interest charges and government debt charges. Without the need to pay interest on our collective debt, we'd all have four-day weekends. If we reclaim the language of economics from the high priests of capitalism and dare to dream of a new system that eliminates usury, only then can our economy – in the true meaning of that word – recover.

Economics comes from the Greek *oikos-nomia*, or "household stewardship." In essence, true economics is the science of the well-being of the household. Aristotle made a clear distinction between *oikonomia* and what

he called *chrematistics*; *chrema* means money and *chrematistics* refers to the art of getting rich or making money. Part of the problem is that our economic and business schools are graduating *chrematists*, not true economists. Our society is dominated by a religion of capitalism, which makes economists its high priests.

Since World War II, the promise of economic development has been founded on the myth that more economic growth, as measured by gross domestic product (GDP) and material prosperity, will lead to greater happiness and will resolve

our social and environmental ills. In 1968, Robert F. Kennedy stated that the GDP measures "everything except that which makes life worthwhile." He noted that it fails to measure community excellence, the joy of children's play or the integrity of public discourse, all the while giving a positive nod to the locks on prison doors, and the cost of cleaning up oil spills and producing nuclear warheads. In other words, the primary measure of economic progress does not capture what is truly meaningful to our lives, including spiritual well-being.

Beyond GDP to what's worthwhile

True economics is about living frugally with a genuine appreciation of the idea of self-sufficiency. To live economically is to have a sense of enough. Most of us in North America have enough in terms of our corporeal needs. In fact, many of us live beyond enough, selfishly or even hedonistically.

In the US Declaration of Independence, Thomas See **Economy** on page 2



The rich young man asks Jesus how to inherit eternal life.



Highlight on health care: Part I of III

Riding the saddle of health care spending

Mike Wevers

Although it could hardly get more divisive, there is no easy resolution in sight for the health care reform debate in the United States. President Obama's push for greater access for all Americans to affordable health care appeared to be moving forward in 2009, with separate legislative bills getting support in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Obama administration's need to meld the separate initiatives into one bill and move it through Congress could now be thwarted, however, because of the Democrats' loss of a critical seat in the Senate in January. When Republican Scott Brown was elected to replace the late Edward Kennedy's Democrat senate seat in Massachusetts,



the Democrats lost their 60-seat, filibuster-proof majority.

What is not lost on the Obama administration, nor the Democrat Party, is that the loss of one of that party's safest senate seats proves it

was all about single issue politics – and the issue was health care reform. Scott Brown ran against the Obama health reform plan and won. The Democrat/Republican Congressional fault line on health care reform has now played out into American homes and families, and if Massachusetts is a bellwether, the divide is going against the Democrats.

And along comes Premier Danny Williams. While Canadians traditionally treat the personal lives of their politicians with a great deal of deference, Premier Williams' decision to go to the United States for heart surgery challenges that tradition. Many Canadians support the Obama administration's health care reform plans, and chafe at the criticism given our publicly

funded health care system by its US detractors; they are now at a loss to explain Williams' actions. Do Canadians need to concede that the United States has a superior health care system?

Health care pressures

At the core of this debate, not too surprisingly, is health care spending. The two US Congressional initiatives range in cost from \$871 billion to over \$1 trillion. Total health care spending in Canada is forecast to be over \$180 billion in 2009. Why does health care spending continue to increase, outpacing inflation each year? It is partly owing to much more expensive procedures, like magnetic resonating images (MRIs), and new drug and gene

See **Health care** on page 2



While income has increased over the past 40 years, happiness levels remain the same for Canadians.

News

Building an economy of love *continued from page 1*

Jefferson noted that the pursuit of happiness is the aim of life, and that virtue (moral excellence) is the foundation of happiness. Jefferson noted that without virtue happiness cannot exist. While the pursuit of happiness may not be included in Canada's motto (peace, order and good government vs life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness), we pride ourselves on having an enviable standard of living. But has this wealth made us happy? Statistics say that about 35 percent of Canadians and Americans consider themselves "very happy." But that number hasn't changed over the past 50 years, even though GDP and incomes have tripled or more. More material goods have not brought higher returns on happiness.

For the ancient Greeks, happiness (*eudamonia*) meant "good spirit" or "well-being of spirit." Happiness related to the condition of one's soul. Aristotle noted that happiness is a sense of well-being resulting from achieving excellence in the fulfillment of one's functions. Thus, happiness is about knowing why you are on the Earth – your vocation or calling. I believe our calling is to create an economy of love characterized not by the current spirit of capitalism but by the ethics of trust, relationships, sharing and reciprocity.

In 2003, Pope John Paul II made a remarkable speech challenging the world to build a new civilization of love. He noted that "authentic development can never be

attained solely through economic means. In fact what has become known as the idolatry of the market – a consequence of the so-called civilization of consumption – tends to reduce persons to things and to subordinate being to having. This seriously detracts from the dignity of the human person and makes promotion of human solidarity difficult at best. Instead, recognition of the spiritual nature of the human person and a renewed appreciation of the moral character of social and economic development must be acknowledged as prerequisites for the transformation of society into a true civilization of love."

A new economic direction

My vision is that of an economy of "genuine wealth," a society where the core values of our hearts are aligned with the measures of our well-being. Virtuous actions will be the measure of progress. We will have a new accounting system which takes a regular inventory of the actual conditions of people (physical, mental, spiritual and emotional well-being), the strength of our relationships (social capital) and levels of trust, and the integrity of nature (forests, rivers, the air) that contribute most to our happiness. This new balance sheet for our communities and nations will include "five capitals" of genuine wealth: human, social, natural, built and even financial capital. Money will no longer be the master over



humanity but the servant of happiness. It will be created according to the needs of people and to maintain the flourishing conditions of society's five capital assets. We will invest in areas that threaten our happiness and pose a risk to the well-being of our children and grandchildren. No longer will we be paying unnecessary interest charges but will learn to become each others' bankers in the spirit of reciprocity. We will, at last, no longer be worshipping Mammon but the God of Love. As the great economist John Maynard Keynes says, "The day is not far off when the economic problem will take the back seat where it belongs, and the arena of the heart and the head will be occupied or reoccupied, by our real problems – the problems of life and of human relations, of creation and behavior and religion."

My family has tried to define our own "good life" by focusing on genuine wealth and budgeting our time and money accordingly. We examined our core values in light of "that which makes life worthwhile." We eliminated all of our debts and freed up

the most precious of resources – time. We now have to work fewer hours for a high and sustainable quality of life. We have more discretionary income to buy our food and other needs locally, to eat organically, and to celebrate slow food. We listen more and pray more. And most importantly, we have more time to spend with our families, our neighbours and in our own personal re-creation. As a result, we are genuinely wealthier.

I imagine a world where wealth will be defined as the harvest of love. All the relationships of love we have ever had are ours to keep and hold for an eternity. Thus our business plan is rather simple: to be the light of love to the world. In other words, to live the two great commandments Jesus gave us. When we let go of structure and the lie of scarcity and accept the truth of abundance, our real wealth will multiply many times – love pressed down and overflowing.

Do we have enough faith and courage to be and act in this truth? ➤

Mark Anielski is the author of *The Economics of Happiness: Building Genuine Wealth*.

Mark wears many hats as an ecological economist, entrepreneur, professor, and president of his family-owned consulting firm, Anielski Management Inc. He lives in Edmonton with his wife and their two daughters.

Highlight on health care *continued*

therapies. Physicians, nurses and other health care practitioners are well paid, even though some believe that they are undervalued for the services they deliver. The details of health care costs and options to control them can be endlessly analyzed. But there are two simple reasons for increased health care spending, and understanding these reasons means realizing that significant annual health care spending increases are unavoidable.

One reason should be readily apparent to most readers. Think of your recent Christmas gatherings with family and friends. Health care spending may not have come up, but many a prayer was said for loved ones facing personal health issues. You may have given thanks for older parents with hip replacements, or prayed for relief from the frustration of waiting lists. Almost everyone knows someone dealing with cancer. Ten or twenty

years ago, were your health concerns for family and friends as prevalent? Probably not. The simplest explanation for this is aging.

Over the last decade, the median age of Canadians rose to 39.5 in 2009, up 3.1 years from 1999. While these numbers don't seem scary, the real problem is the baby-boomers. The peak birth years of this largest age cohort in Canada's history (and the United States as well) were the late 1950s. So we (myself included) are now between 50 and 65 years old.

Cheque, please

The second simple reason why health care spending continues to increase so significantly can be seen through a common, but not widely circulated, graph used in the health industry. You can see why it is referred to as the "saddle graph" (see Fig. 31). The front "horn" of the saddle represents the costs we incur from birth and throughout our first year, which include regular family physician follow up and, in rare cases, intensive neo-natal care. Then we hit the relatively flat part of the saddle, from age 1 to 40, except for the slight spike for 20 to 34 year old females – the child-bearing years, where obstetrical care rises. Males in this age group nearly have to be dragged to the doctor for check-ups, and some studies show they under-use the system, ignoring concerns that become more difficult to treat later.

What is readily apparent is that the greatest portion of health care spending occurs after we reach 50, rising from about \$4,000 per

person per year over 50 to over \$20,000 per person per year over 80. And the boomers are coming! Because they are coming, this simple saddle graph strikes fear into health care budget managers and overwhelms politicians of any political stripe in both Canada and the United States, indeed if not the world. There is a consensus that they do not want to write a blank cheque for health care, but remain confounded as to how to stop it spiralling out of control.

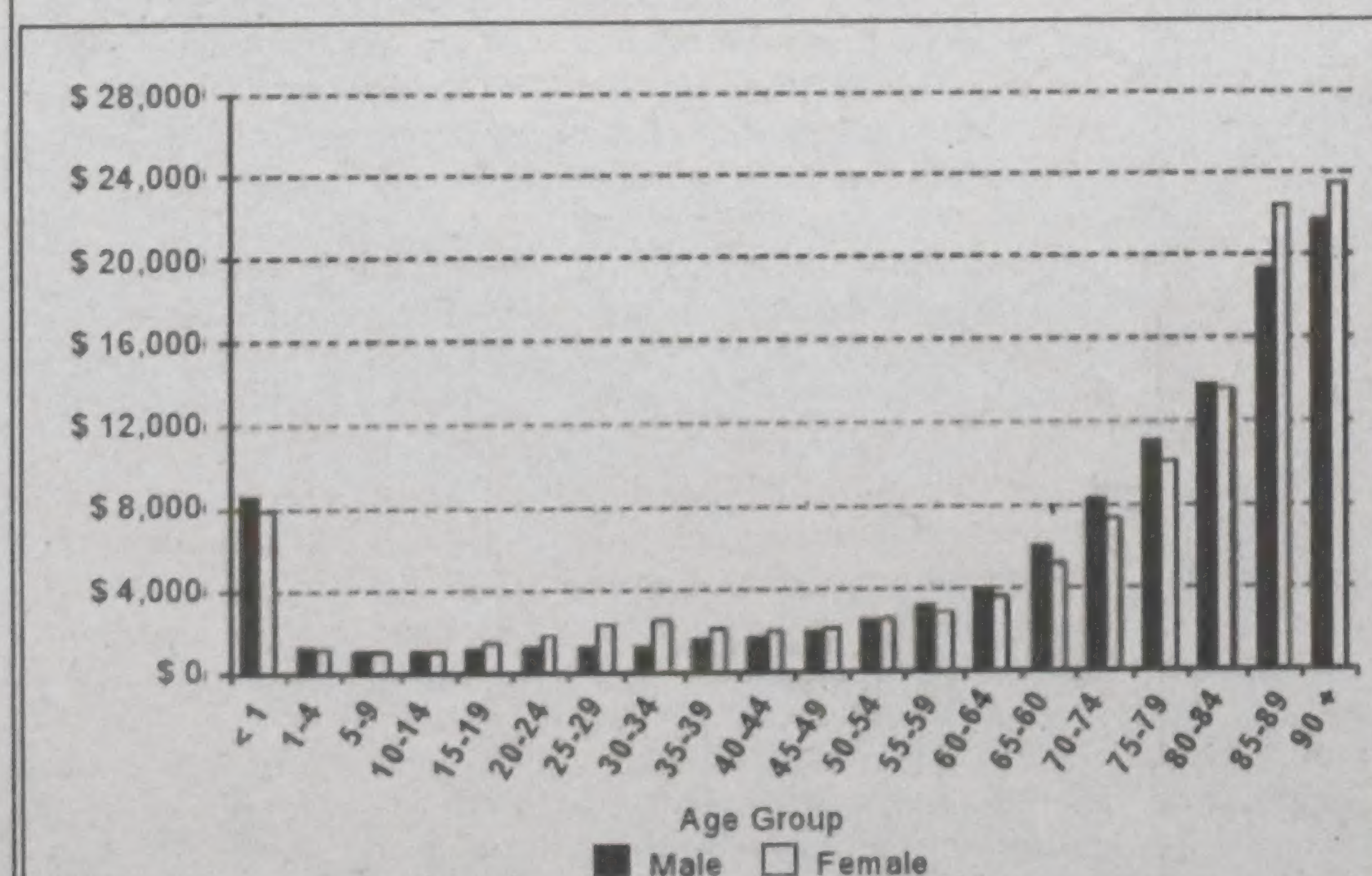
Many believe that Canada's universal, single government payer system remains the best way to deliver services while maintaining spending control. But what do we get for the over \$180 billion we already spend in Canada? Detractors in the United States state that expansion of government health care spending is a sure way to put an unlimited tap on government revenue while deteriorating the access to services most Americans enjoy.

Does President Obama give up on reform, leaving over 30 million Americans without health care insurance? These issues will be explored in subsequent articles in this health care series. ➤

Mike Wevers recently retired as Assistant Deputy Minister with the Alberta Government's Treasury Board. He was also Director of Physician Services for 5 years in Alberta Health and Wellness, responsible for negotiating and administering the government's Master Agreement with the Alberta Medical Association.



Figure 31 Total Provincial/Territorial Government Health Expenditure per Capita, by Age and Sex, Canada 2007



Taken from the National Health Expenditure Database, and printed with permission from the Canadian Institute for Health Information.

News

Consuming our way to compassion

Rachel Anderson

"Help us raise \$10 million for Haiti!!!"

My friend Laura forwarded me this email along with a note: "the subject line enticed me. Then I realized that it was a credit card offer."

The email explains that \$75 will be donated to a Haitian charity for every new credit card account opened with a company. The catch: no money will be donated until the account-holder makes a purchase with the card. Just one week after an earthquake devastated one of the most vulnerable nations in the world, a major credit card company had already figured out how to turn human suffering into a marketing opportunity.

We are all familiar with marketing that plays on our vices: greed, gluttony, vanity. What bothers me about this particular credit card ad is its manipulation of our virtues as well. The ad cleverly conflates our compassion and generosity with our greed. It suggests that we can consume our way into compassion. The more we believe this style of marketing, the harder it becomes to follow our better impulses and give for its own sake, and to trustworthy charities. In my experience, generosity is a muscle that must be exercised in order to grow. Deceiving myself that I am practicing generosity, when I am likely motivated by greed, only weakens those generosity muscles. It's a cheap shortcut.

For my part, I am grateful to friends like Laura, whose critical eye accurately understands our consumer culture and exposes the attempts to convert both vices and virtues into profit. With this kind of attention, maybe we will be able to grow in real compassion long after the credit card companies have ceased manipulating us to "care."

Rachel Anderson works for the Center for Responsible Lending in

Washington, DC. This originally appeared online at Call & Response, the blog of Faith & Leadership, www.faithandleadership.com/blog.



Word wars with our cultured despisers

Most religious traditions are wrestling with the wiles and wonders of modernization, and some faiths tussle more vigorously than others. Evolution is just one example of scientific theory rustling up the feisty faithful. American pastor and evangelist A. C. Dixon said already back in 1900, "Above all things I love peace, but next to peace I love a fight, and I believe the next best thing to peace is a theological fight."

When I was a campus minister at Brock University I organized both "debates" and "dialogues." Some people loved the clash of wits in debates while others felt they generated more heat than light. Dialogue was considered to be more constructive and wholesomely Christian. I generally agree, but even in a friendly panel discussion the most revealing moments were always when the dialogue broke into a good scrap.

Not everyone abides by the rules of a "good fight." The New Atheists (self-proclaimed as "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" – Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris and Daniel Dennett) have provoked more than their share of brawls with their inflammatory rhetoric. Christian response, however, has been no less combative.

Reformed theologian Douglas Wilson toured the USA debating atheist Christopher Hitchens on the topic of "Is Christianity Good for the World?" The movie Collision is an impressive documentary that chronicles the tour and presents the arguments from both sides in a fair and creative way. It's a great window onto the lives of two very different people: a sophisticated urban British atheist and a bearded Calvinist professor with a large family in Idaho.



Is religion child abuse?

Take for example, Oxford biologist Richard Dawkins in his book *The God Delusion* (2006), where he literally claims all religious people suffer from a psychiatric disorder – delusion. He hopes that those "dyed-in-the-wool faith-heads" who believe in an "unreachable, unknowable, sky-fairy" have not been so thoroughly "indoctrinated" that in reading his book they cannot "break free of the vice of religion."

Essayist Christopher Hitchens, while more literary in style, pulls no punches in his book *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (2007). He freely insults the great church father Augustine: "[he] was a self-centered fantasist and an earth-centered ignoramus." Chapters in the book, bluntly titled, range from "Religion Kills" to "Is Religion Child Abuse?" and even declare "The 'New' Testament Exceeds the Evil of the 'Old' One."

'Ditchkins'

Now my focus in this short article is not the content of their arguments but the rhetoric – and more specifically, the combative nature of it. Dispassionate analysis may increase understanding, but fiery rhetoric captivates the crowds. Can Christians cultivate provocative

rhetoric that tingles the imagination?

Philosopher Alvin Plantinga had a hard time taking Dawkins' book seriously: "If Dawkins ever gets tired of his day job, a promising future awaits him as a writer of political attack ads," he notes. "You might say that some of his forays into philosophy are at best sophomoric, but that would be unfair to sophomores; the fact is (grade inflation aside), many of his arguments would receive a failing grade in a sophomore philosophy class."

Literary theorist Terry Eagleton, while not self-identifying as Christian, playfully refers to Dawkins and Hitchens with one term: "Ditchkins." He responds to Hitchens' barb that "thanks to the telescope and the microscope, [religion] no longer offers an explanation of anything important" by saying "Christianity was never meant to be an explanation of anything in the first place. It is rather like saying that thanks to the electric toaster we can forget about Chekov." "Ditchkins," he explains, "considers that no religious belief, anywhere or anytime, is worthy of any respect whatsoever. And this, one might note, is the opinion of a man deeply averse to dogmatism."

Imaginative debating

For those who like to ask, "What would Jesus do?" the answer may be surprising. For the skeptics of his day, the Sadducees, he sometimes replied to questions with questions or evaded direct answers with parables. His most caustic remarks were reserved for the religious teachers, the Pharisees, whom he cursed, saying: "Woe to you, you blind guides and hypocrites! You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?"

We would do well to consider broad theological principles for a "good fight." The better of what passion and wisdom demand may be exemplified in a new book entitled *God is Dead and I Don't Feel So Good Myself* (2010) – a book edited in part by ICS junior member Jon Stanley. "Many Christian responses to popular atheism have been pedestrian, patronizing, dismissive, and violent," the preface says, "mirroring the New Atheists' hostility toward the Christian faith and religious culture at large." While they still make arguments, they do so using not only essays, but also interviews, poetry, and at the centre of the book, photographs of an art exhibit by Paul Roorda. This book is not exactly placing flowers in advancing bayonets, but it offers a creative approach that may instruct young Christians and possibly intrigue atheist antagonists.



Peter Schuurman lives in Guelph, Ontario where he parents his two children, Joseph and Petra. He is working toward a PhD and teaches World Religion at Redeemer.

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Guest Editorial/Editorial

Conflict demands a paradigm shift

Judy Cook

Conflict is inescapable. It arises from time to time in every marriage, every family, every political party or school society, every business enterprise, every church – in short, everywhere people are closely engaged with each other in a group setting over time. You could say that conflict is normal; it is part of life. And that would be true. But why is it true? Why does it seem inescapable that sooner or later one part of a close community (like a family or a church) at times experiences conflicted feelings about another part of that community? Why can't we all just get along – as the saying goes.

All conflict arises because of some real or perceived experience of injustice and/or injury, or because of some strongly held beliefs. For instance, parents are inevitably called on to redirect their young children's beliefs that they are being unfairly treated by their siblings or their parents in relation to themselves. Anger flares and fists fly in preschoolers at home with each other more quickly than parents can cry "stop it!" and also more regularly than they would wish. Children react in unbridled ways to express rage or displeasure, ownership or jealousy towards siblings. Parents and friends, or other caregivers, usually respond with relatively cheerful and unconcerned monitoring, because they know it is a "stage" kids grow out of, eventually.

But do they? Is conflict experienced only by the young, the immature, or is there something inherent in our natures that demands conflict, even when we are adult, and in particular, even with those we consider to be part of us?

Fear of conflict

There are two things to be considered: 1) We do live in a world steeped in injustice and subject to injury because of sin; and 2) we express closeness and love not only through acceptance and forgiveness of each other, but also when we "speak the truth in love," i.e., when we take the risk of sharing our anger, our misgivings, our hurt or displeasure at actions, events, or directions being taken by those we are close to. In short, when we risk conflict.

Yet people are often afraid of conflict. "Forgive and forget" is a much more strongly held belief, particularly among Christian groups, than the belief that conflict is

to be welcomed as a natural and necessary part of any organization's (including organized churches) ability to flourish and grow. And that fear is often justified. Often "speaking the truth" as we perceive it is not done in love, but rather with anger and bitterness, with distrust, with judgment, with pride, with a need to win, etc. The result of such confrontations is increased conflict, more "stuck-ness," and an abundance of injury, none of which lead to growth or constructive change. It then makes sense to speak of conflict as something to be "managed," or to be "resolved." We want to get rid of it as quickly and painlessly as possible. Let's all just get along; let's forgive and forget; enough is enough – are all common slogans we believe can best solve the problem of conflict. We believe in conflict management, in conflict resolution.

Focus on relationships

To change strongly-held beliefs requires a paradigm shift. It is not easy to begin to see conflict management or conflict resolution as something leading to more harm than good. And yet, I would suggest that such a paradigm shift is necessary for the church (and other communities) to be able to grow and flourish. And the way in which such a paradigm shift can best be accomplished is through the adoption of restorative justice principles. John Paul Lederach, Professor of International Peacebuilding at the University of Notre Dame, in *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation* compares conflict resolution (CR) to conflict transformation (CT) by posing a "key question." In CR the question is, "How do we end something not desired?" with a focus on content. In CT the question is, "How do we end something destructive and build something desired?" with a focus on *relationships* and the *processes* required to get there (p. 33).

When Isaiah (Ch. 2) and Micah (Ch. 4) prophesy that in the "last days" modes of destruction will give way to the practice of up-building between nations (swords into ploughshares), these prophets are not suggesting that conflict will cease, I don't believe. They are suggesting that God will provide for a better way of responding to conflict than with retribution and revenge – or the other side of that coin Christians tend to prefer – with denial, passive anger, or cheap forgiveness. The prophets' call is not the destruction of the sword and then the provision of a ploughshare, but to a process of changing the weapon that destroys into a tool for growth. Restorative Justice practices can help show the way.

Judy Cook is a family therapist living in Hamilton, ON. She is a member of Meadowlands Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Ancaster.

Are tattoos a form of self mutilation?



Bert Witvoet

A while ago I preached in our church a sermon on self-alienation. The sermon was part of a series on alienation: alienation from the creation, from God, from others and from self. I made a reference to self-mutilation in our society in the following excerpt:

"Self injury, also called self harm and self abuse, refers to deliberate acts that cause harm to one's body, mind and spirit. Examples include cutting the skin with razor blades or pieces of glass; burning oneself, hitting oneself; scratching or picking scabs or preventing wounds from healing; hair pulling; and inserting objects into one's body. Cutting is the most common form of self-injury among today's youth.

People who self injure may not be trying to kill themselves. Usually, they are trying to feel better. By focusing on physical pain they can forget about the spiritual and psychological pain. All of these things show that we as fallen human beings are alienated from God, from our neighbour and from ourselves. All of these actions indicate how self-alienation shows itself in how we treat our bodies. I may be in controversial waters here, but I look upon tattoos as an expression of self-alienation – self mutilation."

A good challenge

A week after I had delivered my homily, a young friend accosted me and said that he had appreciated my sermon, but he disagreed with my statement that tattoos are a form of self-mutilation. "It all depends on what your message is," he said. He knew a man who had tattooed a crucifix on his arm. This allowed him to testify of his faith whenever someone questioned him on it. "Do you believe that that, too, is a form of self-mutilation?" he asked.

I said, "Yes. The end does not justify the means. God has given us everything we need to testify of him: a mouth, a face to express kindness, a body to lend someone a hand. A tattoo is not necessary."

"Well, what about ear piercing? Is that also a form of self-mutilation?"

"Yes, it is," I answered. He looked at me with a puzzled look. He was interested in what my thoughts were, and loves the challenge of new ideas, but he said that he still disagreed with me.

Made in God's image

Our little discussion came back to my mind afterwards. I wondered if I had been too absolutistic in my comments. Can you really say that a crucifix on your arm or a hole in your ear is a form of self-mutilation, let alone a form of self-hatred? A hole in your tongue or nose, perhaps, but what about all these cute little girls who get their ears pierced before they are four?

Somehow I saw a connection between what I had said and my ever-increasing conviction that we must try to see whatever we do in the light of the biblical concept of having been created in the image of God. John Calvin sees this image of God as the picture of God's glory in us. This picture has been damaged by our fall into sin, but it's still there, like a broken mirror. Because of this built-in imprint, we have a calling to reflect God's glory.

God gave us everything we need in our body, soul and mind to show the world how glorious God our Maker and Redeemer is. All we need to do is offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is true worship. (Romans 12:1b) The more I reflect on what it means to having been made in the image of God, the more I see all our attempts to add our own versions of glory to our life as ways in which we conform to the patterns of this world. (Romans 12:2)

Continued on page 5

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INFO

*FaithCARE (Communities Affirming Restorative Practices)

An ecumenical service to churches in conflict
 Contact: Mark Vander Vennen

*Restorative Justice Initiatives (RJI)

Christian Reformed Church of North America ministry
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*Hamilton District Christian High School (HDCH)

Has developed and is promoting a restorative justice culture for its faculty, staff, and students.
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Letters

What do you think?

Thank you to those who responded to our question on climate change. John van der Beek wraps up that discussion on the next page. For March, we invite your answers to the following question:

Have President Obama's setbacks outpaced his accomplishments over the past year?

Please send this and other letters to the editor to angela@christiancourier.ca. We may edit your comments for clarity and length.

God's word is a welcome straightjacket

I might as well come right out with it: Bert's editorial ("Don't bind our consciences, please" Jan. 25) bothers me enough to write this letter. He feels that the memo of Calvin College's Board of Trustees (which reads: "Advocacy by faculty and staff, both in and out of the classroom, for homosexual practice and same-sex marriage is unacceptable") is "a rigid academic straightjacket." I disagree with Bert.

Now I agree that we should be careful about imposing rigid academic straightjackets on Calvin's faculty. But here we are talking about "advocacy," which means "active support for." That goes much further than exploring issues like "homosexual practice and same-sex marriage." To allow Calvin College's professors to advocate practices that the Christian Reformed Church has formally declared to be unbiblical should indeed be unacceptable. If advocacy of such issues is allowed, would it be any different to extend it to

the practice of pedophilia and the endorsement of pornography, and whatever else we believe to be unbiblical? Where do we draw the line?

If we call being bound by the Bible and our confessions "a rigid academic straightjacket," then we need such straightjackets. Anyone who doesn't want to wear them does not belong on the faculty of a Christian institution, and should be honest enough to resign.

Our consciences, like all of our lives, should submit to the teaching of God's Word. That we have sometimes bound people's consciences unduly (and perhaps still do), is true enough. Romans 14 also reminds us not to carry that too far, but the apostle Paul limited that to "disputable matters," to ceremonial observances. Paul did not extend that to moral issues. Academic freedom clearly has its limits, especially for Christian teachers. We all need to be bound by the Word of God. ➤

Adrian Van Geest
Hamilton, Ontario

The dangers of questioning the Bible

In "Don't Bind our Consciences, Please," (Jan. 25) is Bert really saying our professors should have the freedom to make a pro-homosexual practise and same sex marriage statement? The day this happens we have a schism I think. Yes, I think the homosexual issue is to be regarded as a confessional issue. The Old and New Testament are very clear on this.

Why bring up Pastor Geelkerken and the serpent talking to Eve? The Bible tells us

the serpent spoke to Eve, the donkey spoke to Balaam, and let's leave it at that. The first plague in Egypt changed water into blood. We don't know if it was human or animal blood, or some other natural discolouring... But the Bible says blood.

What I would like to point out is this: what else is not accurate in the Bible? ➤

John Vanderheide
Lindsay, Ontario

Are tattoos a form of self mutilation? continued

Futile thinking

Not that I judge people who carry a positive tattoo on their body or pierce their ears. These bodily intrusions are minor, even socially acceptable, forms of self-mutilation. But who can deny that a mild invasion of the body has taken place? Are they forms of self-hatred? That's too strong a word for an action that has no intent to harm behind it. But even without a negative motive, we still run the risk of interfering with God's desire to be glorified through what he has made.

Paul hints at our task to glorify God through our image bearing when he writes,

"For although they [Paul is talking about human beings who suppress the truth] knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like human beings and birds and animals and reptiles." (Romans 1:21-23) This passage, although addressed to all sinful humanity, focuses especially on idol worshipers. But we are not free from our own forms of idolatry either.

My young questioners did throw in a question about external adornments, such as jewelry and clothing. I think of them as

belonging in a different category. There is no invasion of the body here. Just the same, we do well not to hinder our calling to glorify God also in these matters. I wrote a hymn once on this topic. I doubt any church hymnal committee will any time soon pick it up, but it does convey my understanding of the role of clothing.

*When in our clothing God is glorified,
and shirts and blouses keep us dignified,
and fashion models weep and strippers cry:*

Alleluia.

*When brand names fade and quality survives,
And fads no longer keep us occupied,
And styles are personal and sanctified:*

Alleluia.

*They took his clothes, as once was prophesied;
his naked body then was crucified;
his seamless shirt was kept till Eastertide:*

Alleluia.

*When clothes are honest and no longer lie,
but signal joy and hope and peaceful pride,
then our Creator God is magnified:*

Alleluia.

(To the tune of the Psalter Hymnal: 512)

And so we struggle along in our fallible attempts to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, warts and all, but without tattoos, I hope. ➤

Poem as Olympic Prayer

Almighty God,
sovereign ruler far beyond the world's highest cauldron,
brighter than the brightest Olympic torch.
holy be thy name.

We confess that in these times of Olympic frenzy and celebration, we are confused and troubled: Whom shall we worship?

Shall it be the ancient gods of Greece and Rome?

Our modern icons of torch and cauldron, and dazzling stadiums?

Of sport and fame?

Wealth and power?

For whose glory are these?

Forgive us for our neglect of suffering, both human and environment, in the city of Vancouver and its environs.

Lead us not into the temptation of priding ourselves with human accomplishments.

Deliver us from the darkness of all evil, when we fail to acknowledge you.

Come, light our torches, not with millions of cubic units of precious fuels, but with your love.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever.

Amen.

Maybe we all should write poems and prayers and send them to Olympic dignitaries for their consideration as they write their speeches. Wouldn't it be a glorious day if our Premier Gordon Campbell, or Prime Minister Steven Harper, offered words of thanks and blessing and honour... to God? Then the whole world would see the light of God.

Shine Jesus shine, fill this land with the Father's glory

Blaze, Spirit blaze, set our hearts on fire

Flow, river flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy

Send forth Your word, Lord and let there be light. ➤

Peter Rhebergen
Smithers, B.C.



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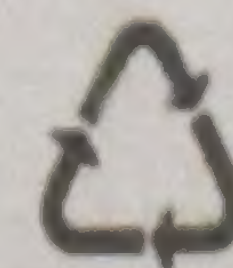
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Opinions

Humans are not climate change culprits

Kyoto, Copenhagen, greenhouse gas emissions, global warming, carbon footprints, carbon offsets, catastrophe, doomsday.... These terms have become a monotonous mantra assailing our senses almost day and night. It began as a quiet whisper back in the early sixties, when Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*. Some of us then said, "Hey, she's right! DDT is harmful to the environment." Little did we know that banning DDT would eventually lead to the death of millions of children bitten by malaria and yellow-fever-carrying mosquitoes. That was a bad environmental decision that has since been reversed. It is my great fear that we are on the verge of making some other costly and downright dangerous environmental decisions, based on a very inexact science and flawed computer models. Initially we called it global warming. Now it is "climate change." Who can argue with that? Is there really anything more fickle or changeable than the climate? In this case, "the only thing constant is change" is true.

Some scientists say temperatures are rising abnormally quickly; others say the earth is actually cooling. If temperatures are rising, it would not be the first time. Ten thousand years ago the Wisconsin Glacier covered all of Niagara Peninsula and it, along with much of North America, was buried under a five-kilometres-thick layer of ice. When the ice slowly began to melt those living at the time also probably said, "Climate's changing! It's getting warmer. Ice is melting and the sea level's rising."

According to scientific evidence the above scenario played itself out world-wide several times. Theoretically, our water-covered planet should be a frozen waste land, a world covered in a thick sheet of ice. If our world was not be surrounded by its atmosphere, the average surface temperature would be some 33 degrees lower (-18°C instead of the present average of +15°C). It is the atmosphere and the heat-trapping gases that provide our earth with its mild and relatively stable temperature. Without them, earth would be one giant snowball.

Part of a natural rhythm

Most environmentalists ignore the natural cycles that have been in effect ever since our planet was formed and began revolving around the sun. The Serbian astrophysicist, Milutin Milankovitch, proposed the idea that cyclical variations in the earth's orbit such as obliquity, eccentricity and precession cause major climatic changes. There is considerable evidence that variations in these cycles, along with cycles in sunspot activity and movement of the tectonic plates, result in climatic changes that may even have been the cause of past Ice Ages and could bring about future ones. Yet none of this is ever mentioned in today's debate on climate change. Why not?

Today, scientists such as Berger and Loutie suggest that the current warm trend may continue for another 50,000 years while others like Ruddiman postulate that without the presence of today's man-made green house gases the world would be at

least 2° cooler and well on the way to another Ice Age.

Global warming is nothing new. It has occurred many times before, even when no humans were around. Furthermore, there is no consensus regarding its causes. "But," you say, "all those scientists that participated in the convention in Copenhagen can't be wrong!" No, they are not wrong. Our climate is changing, but not solely due to man's activities? It is a combination of many factors, greenhouse gases being one of them. Even if this last factor could be entirely removed, the climate would still change. And therein lies the problem. We find it difficult to accept that our world is changing and we can't control it. We like to believe that our destiny is in our own hands, but it isn't. We can predict tsunamis, earthquakes, hurricanes, and tornados but, as yet, we cannot prevent them from happening. We have enough knowledge of weather patterns to be able to pinpoint areas in the world where drought will occur, but we cannot prevent the drought. Perhaps we can predict climate change, too, but we cannot prevent it.

The changes we are witnessing today may be a mere blip on the screen of time or they may be the precursors of much greater change and global upheaval. Perhaps one day our descendants, if they survive these upheavals, will once again stand on a field of ice and remark, "Yep! Things sure are changing."

John van der Beek
Beamsville, Ontario

Willow-grace

I'll bet that every Sunday school child knows the answer to this question: "What is the meaning of the rainbow?" "That God will never destroy the world with a flood again."

Not to make things difficult, but... what do you tell them about Haiti? "Oh, it was an earthquake." Or Indonesia? "It was a tsunami." Or New Orleans? "That was a hurricane, dear."



And why a rainbow? Why not just the sun? Or God could have put a something that looked like a tree or a raven or a dove into the sky. Why a rainbow?

Long ago I read or heard something from Dr. Seerveld that stuck in my head: God put his "bow of judgement" in the clouds. This naturally made me think of willows.

1 Although New Orleans did recently win a fairly significant sports event, the city itself is still not restored.

Everywhere I've ever lived there have been willows. And willows make good bows (as in *bow-n-arrow*).

As a child living near Lake Michigan, I used red osier (actually not a true willow, but who's arguing). We cut off four foot, branch-free, springy sections about as big as your thumb. Then we split the end or notched it, tied store cord (butcher cord) around one end, bent the willow, attached the other end, made up some arrows from anything reasonably straight and *kazam!* we were big game hunters or native warriors.

At my present home there are lots of red osier bushes but also lots of moose, so the plants don't get too tall. Everything under the snow line seems to get nipped and tucked away into moose paunches. But there are "ordinary" willows (*salix* is the Latin group name, from which we get the active ingredient of ASA – aspirin – by the way).

So quite logically (in my brain, anyway), when I was due to teach the story about Noah, the flood, and the rainbow (we skipped his drunken spree) to my boys' club at the church (Junior Cadets), I thought about willows. Willow bows, to be precise.

I walked along our country road with my wife selecting out prospective bows growing along the shoulder. The thrill of spotting "just the right stick" hadn't left me in fifty years. So we hacked off some likely candidates.

When Cadet night came, I showed the boys how to make the bows, after explaining things like how bad people were before the Great Flood, the consequences of God's displeasure, details about the big boat, and the animals. We had a small amount of black humour thinking about the left-behind bunch crying, "But Noah, we were kidding; we thought you were wise and good to make a boat in the desert!"

And then the explanation of using a bow (as in *bow-n-arrow*) for warfare, judgement, death. The delight of seeing God putting his bow away, hanging it up on pegs, you might say. God giving the world time to repent because

he loves to forgive.

God's bow is hanging up. Not in use. And it won't be until the end of time. Arching over all of us is a reminder of God's mercy. God's bow (a simple one, not a recurve or compound or crossbow) is as beautiful, as amazing as his grace.

But of course the night is still young. And a lesson needs a craft. So we made bows from the willow sticks. We made little bows, medium-sized bows, and arrows (dull arrows). Then I drew a rabbit and a pig on the blackboard and we tried to shoot them at the lengthy distance of eight feet. Several animals were struck. We "acted out" the judgement part of the lesson.

And for the end of the lesson, we hung our bows on push-pins on the bulletin boards. We "acted out" God's graciousness by putting our bows aside. They hang above the photos of the boys in the Junior Calvinist Cadet Corps of Telkwa, B.C.

Curt Gesch makes willow bows and shoots them at snowmen he makes in his backyard. He is 61 years old. He also makes willow canes, but he buys the aspirin (so far).



Flowers & Thistles
Curt Gesch



News

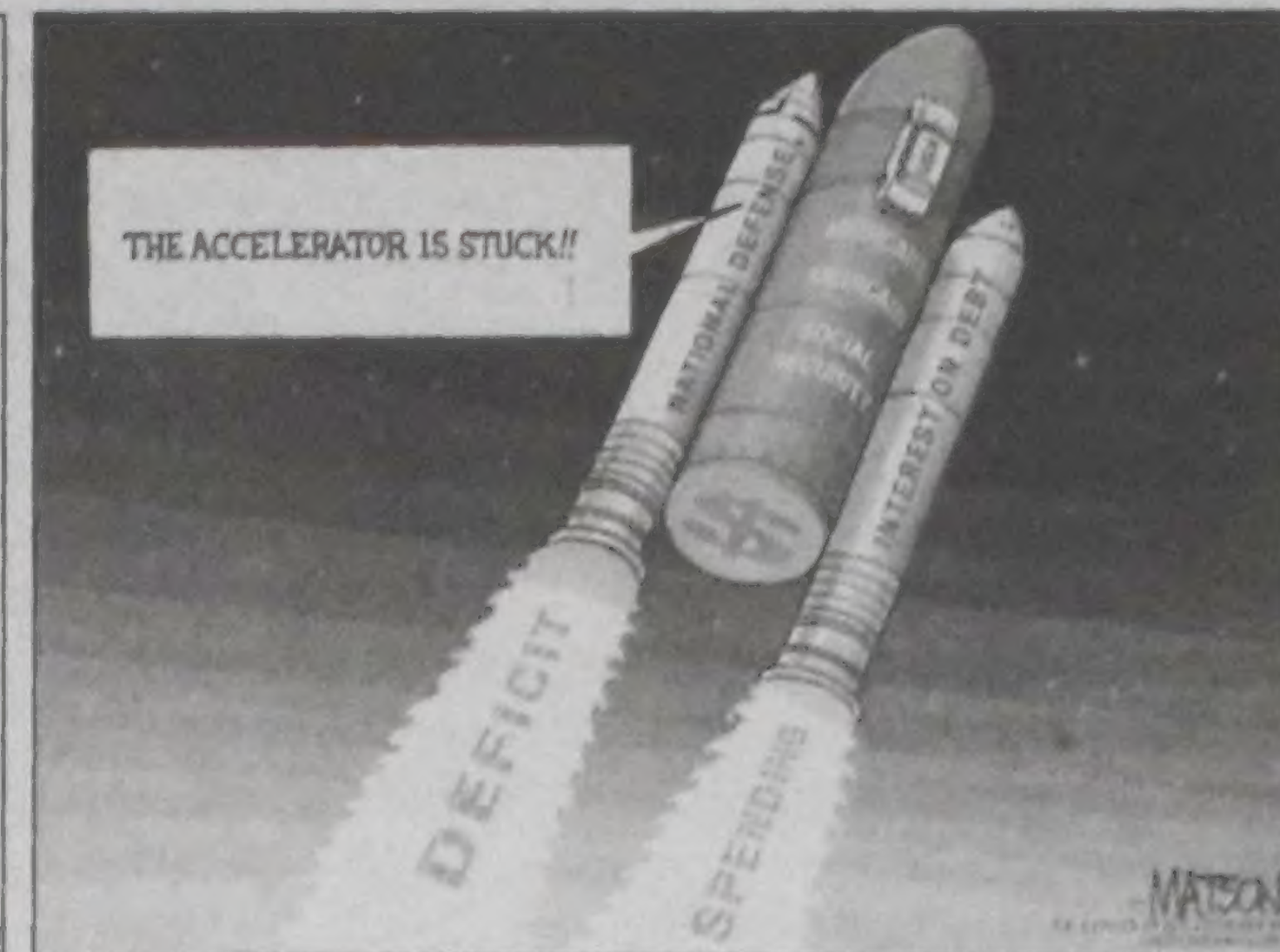
Total recall: Toyota's pedal defect is its Achilles heel

Toyota is the world's largest automaker, and its vehicles are often cited by car owners as the most reliable on the market. Two rounds of recalls related to defective gas pedals and poorly installed floor mats, however, have damaged the Japanese company's bottom line and shaken the confidence of investors and customers in the auto giant.

Toyota's quality control woes began last September, when the car manufacturer advised consumers to remove floor mats from certain Toyota models in order to prevent them from snaring the vehicle's gas pedal and causing unintended acceleration. Roughly 102 such instances were reported, including one in the San Diego area that resulted in the death of four people in August. In that case, a Lexus vehicle accelerated to speeds of 190 km/h before it crashed. Investigators blamed an overly long floor mat for the accident, which led to the recall of 4.2 million products, including the number-one selling passenger car in the US, the Camry, and the top selling gas-electric hybrid, the Prius.



As an international car company, Toyota's been taking flak from cartoonists all over the world.



Danger underfoot

No incidents as frightening as the accident in San Diego have been related to the more recent accelerator defect. While fears about floor mats persist, these latest problems are with the accelerators themselves. The pedals, manufactured by Indiana-based CTS Corporation, can stick after they have been subjected to extended use. If the pedal sticks in the activated down position, it may cause an accident. At the moment, Toyota does have a complicated fix for the problem, whereas the previous defect could be remedied by simply removing the floor mat to free the pedal.

CTS builds parts to Toyota's engineering specifications, which means the automaker is to blame for the design flaw. 2.3 million cars were recalled in the United States on January 21, 2010. Eight of Toyota's most popular models were affected. By January 28, the recall spread to include Toyota products sold in Europe and China. Within a week, 5.35 million Toyota cars were taken off the road in the US. 270,000 Toyotas purchased in Canada were also recalled for "repair." Currently, Toyota has halted or slowed production at six of its plants. Toyota factories in Cambridge and Woodstock, Ontario, which together employ 5,900 people, will be among those affected.

In addition, the company has frozen the sale of all models included in the recall. The market analysis firm Global Insight estimated that Toyota could lose out on 20,000 sales per week as a result of the stoppage. It is difficult to determine the total impact of the recall to Toyota's future strength as a company, but the initial indicators — such as stock value — are not good.

Accelerated troubles

The recall and its ugly side effects come at a difficult time for Toyota, as the auto producer was only just starting a tenuous return to profitability. In the July-September quarter, its profits were 21.8 billion yen (241 million USD), with most of the company's profits coming from the US market. That gain was only secured after three losing quarters; the company may return to the red once the full impact of the recalls becomes known. Toyota's current problems are so alarming that one auto industry expert has called them the sector's greatest crisis since the bankruptcy of GM and Chrysler.

In a strange twist, Toyota's vigilance may also be working against the organization's plans for recovery. Toyota has been very open with consumers and has pulled several million cars from the market in order to protect its clients and perhaps salvage its reputation, but the general public may decide the entire Toyota brand is flawed and purchase other vehicles

that seem safer and more reliable.

Safety Research and Strategies, a US-based firm, said that 2,274 incidents of unintended acceleration in Toyotas caused 275 crashes and 18 deaths since 1999. More quickly than anyone expects, this sort of issue may become the

Achilles heel of the otherwise powerful brand.

Harold Alkema works as a researcher with a private firm in Ottawa specializing mainly in Native Affairs and historical research.



Animal rights I:

What I have learned from God's creation

Canadians hold differing views on the use of animals in research. Some argue that, like humans, animals have rights and thus should not be used in research. Others argue that animal rights, if any, are limited and that the benefits to humans — and to animals — of animal research far outweigh the cost to the individual animal. As a neuroscientist, I use animals (usually rats) in my research; clearly, I feel that animal research can be justified. I am also a Christian, so my research ethics must be in keeping with my religious beliefs and my understanding of the rights that our Father gives us. My understanding of the use of animals in research is informed both by my knowledge of God's creation and by the insights I have gained from studying God's special revelation.

Before exploring this issue, I should point out that in Canada, the United States and Europe all animal research is governed by a fairly sophisticated set of regulations designed to protect the animals used from unnecessary pain and suffering. At Wilfrid Laurier University, I cannot order animals until I have submitted a 17-page ethics protocol explaining the project in detail and have had it approved by the Animal Care Committee following the guidelines of the Canadian Council on Animal Care. Thus, while I am permitted to do research with animals, what I propose to do must be approved by a committee including my peers, members of the community, veterinarians and students.

The more we have in common

There are several reasons for doing animal research: increasing our understanding of God's world; learning things that benefit the animals directly; and, finally, discovering general aspects of creation that help humans. It has been argued that things we have learned from animal research have added years to the average person's life through better medical care. Before a drug like insulin could be used to treat a human medical condition like diabetes it was tested in animals (dogs) for both safety and efficacy. This work is based on the insight that many biological processes are similar in animals and humans.

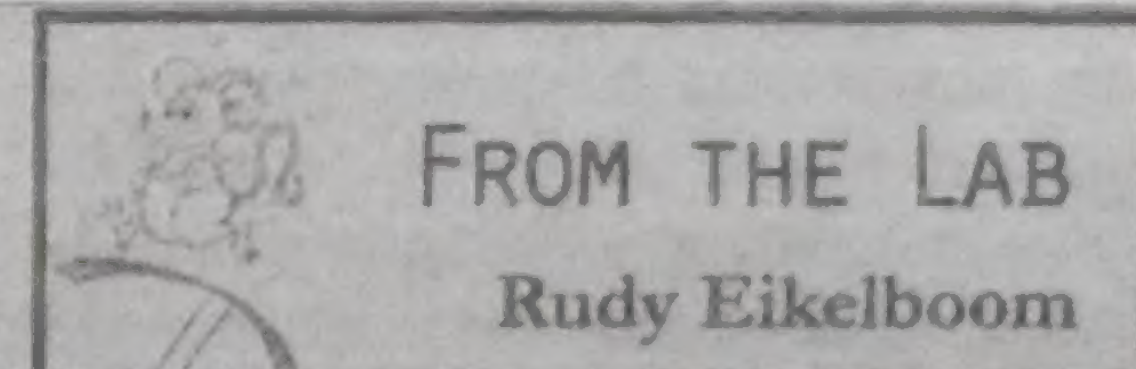
These similarities are not limited only to biological processes, however. Researchers have discovered, by looking at a variety of species, that there are psychological

connections, common processes and similarities between species. As animal species become more similar to humans in terms of their biology and DNA, their mental capabilities become more like that of humans. For example, great apes, like humans, have some sense of a self-concept. Whereas when a dog looks in a mirror it apparently sees another dog and a lonely budgie can find friendship with a small mirror, humans and great apes recognize themselves in a mirror. We both have a sense of self that leads us to say, in looking at the mirror, "I have a smudge on my forehead," rather than, "That creature has a smudge on his forehead." A human's self-concept may be richer than that of a chimpanzee, but researchers have found a clear gradation in mental state from one species to another.

These similarities in biology and mental states are what enable us to use information gathered in one species and apply it to another. They also raise an ethical dilemma, however: the more related we are to our research animals, the more we have to recognize that the rights and protections we ascribe to ourselves may also have to be applied to the animals. The very reason we want to do research in an animal may also be the reason we have difficulty justifying it ethically. If it is unethical to do a particular line of research with a human, it may be unethical to do it with a chimpanzee. One solution to this dilemma is to suggest that ethics need to be scaled to the species; that is, the closer to human the animal, the more human-like the ethical requirements for that animal should be. Rats can be housed in individual cages while primates are usually housed in more natural social groups in large living quarters. This solution assumes that humans are the standard by which other species should be judged.

For Christians, who look to find our moral compass in God's will and law, we may want to approach this issue differently. While humans are given a special status in a Christian worldview they too are part of God's creation. In my next column, I will address the way that looking at God's Word leads me to think about the ethics of my research.

Rudy Eikelboom (reikelboom@wlu.ca) is associate professor of psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario.



Church

CRC worship symposium offers insight, challenges

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – The Calvin Symposium on Worship opened on January 28 with a service that included songs and prayer in different languages and children performing liturgical dance. The event was sponsored by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and Center for Excellence in Preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary.

Some 1,500 people attended, including 160 international guests from 39 countries. Forty colleges, universities and seminaries across the globe sent students and/or faculty and 30 Christian High Schools from Canada and the U.S. sent teams of students and teachers. Attendance was higher than in the last two years.

People who came indicated they were interested in how to make worship more meaningful once they returned home. Many wanted to hear preachers and speakers address the major issues of the day, and to learn how that can be done effectively in a worship setting.

The symposium included a jazz vespers service, a presentation on the upcoming joint hymnal of the Christian Reformed Church

and the Reformed Church in America, a panel discussion on youth ministry trends, a display of worship projects funded by the Calvin Institute, and a tour featuring the architecture of several churches in the Grand Rapids area. A plenary panel and seminar on “Worship, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation – Global, Local, and Personal” had both international and North American presenters.

Reconciliation comes through Christ

Another popular session was a panel in which Archbishop Elias Chacour participated. An author and well-known promoter of peace, Chacour spoke to a packed room about the problems facing Palestinians living under the Israelis. Chacour described his family having been forced off the land they had been tending for many years by Israeli soldiers in the late 1940s.

Hard as it was to lose his home, Chacour realized that his best approach was to try to better understand the Israelis, their motivations and plight, and to forgive them.



Worship service in the Calvin College Chapel.

PHOTO CREDIT: CALVIN INSTITUTE OF WORSHIP

The situation made him want to devote his life to being a peacemaker. He realized, however, that “justice cannot be built

without having internal righteousness and peace inside,” which comes from following Jesus Christ, who “gave his life to us.”

Chacour became an Israeli citizen and serves today as the Archbishop of the Melkite Catholic Church in Haifa, Israel. Although tensions remain high between Israelis and Palestinians, the only answer forward comes from living as Christ commanded: love God and then your neighbor as yourself, said Chacour.

Pope reflects on justice – God’s and ours – as Lenten theme

VATICAN CITY (Zenit) – Divine justice, so radically different from its human counterpart, puts us human beings before the truth that we are not self-sufficient and that we depend one another to be fulfilled, Benedict XVI reflected in a message released for Lent. Lent began on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 17. The Pope’s theme for

In reality, however, this classical definition does not specify what ‘due’ is to be rendered to each person.” What a person “needs most cannot be guaranteed to him by law. In order to live life to the full, something more intimate is necessary that can be granted only as a gift.” We live by that love that only God can communicate, since God created the human person in his image and likeness, said Benedict.

Injustice, on the other hand, is rooted in the heart, the Pontiff said. “Its origin lies in the human heart where the seeds are found of a mysterious cooperation with evil.” The human being is by nature “open to sharing freely but he finds in his being a strange force of gravity that makes him turn in and affirm himself above and against others. This is egoism, the result of original sin.” So how can we free ourselves from selfishness and open ourselves to love? Benedict asked.

Link between faith and justice

In answering, he reflected on God’s chosen people Israel and how God had created a link between faith in himself as God and Israelites’ justice toward their neighbors. “The Hebrew word itself that indicates the virtue of justice, *sedaqah*, expresses this well. *Sedaqah*, in fact, signifies on the one hand full acceptance of the will of the God of Israel; on the other hand, equity in relation to one’s neighbour,” Benedict explained. He added that “the two meanings are linked because giving to the poor for the Israelite is none other than restoring what is owed to God, who had pity on the misery of his people.”

The Pope then reflected on Christ as the justice of God. Christ’s justice, he said, “is the justice that comes from grace, where it is not man who makes amends, heals himself and others. It is not man’s sacrifices that free him from the weight of his faults, but the loving act of God who opens himself in the extreme, even to the point of bearing in himself the curse due to man so as to give in return the blessing due to God.”

In this scheme, the Pope acknowledged, it seems that “each one receives the contrary of his ‘due.’” But “in reality, here we discover divine justice, which is so profoundly different from its human counterpart. God has paid for us the price of the exchange in his Son, a price that is truly exorbitant. Before the justice of the cross, man may rebel, for this reveals how man is not a self-sufficient being but in need of Another in order to realize himself fully. Conversion to Christ, believing in the Gospel, ultimately means this: to exit the illusion of self-sufficiency in order to discover and accept one’s own need. Humility is required to accept that I need Another to free me from ‘what is mine,’ to give me gratuitously ‘what is his.’”

When a Christian is strengthened by this experience, the Pope concluded, then he or she is “moved to contribute to creating just societies, where all receive what is necessary to live according to the dignity proper to the human person and where justice is enlivened by love.”

‘Ordinary’ lives of faith

Laura Truax, senior pastor of LaSalle Street Church in Chicago and teaching pastor at the University of Chicago Divinity School, noted that for most people at the event their story was probably not one of oppression and unprecedented pain. The Bible makes it clear that God cares deeply for the oppressed and downtrodden but that doesn’t mean that those living normal lives are ignored or have no role to play, said Truax.

People should neither worry over what they aren’t or what they could be, she continued, but should pay attention to today. “God is using the little moments of our lives to make up his story. Believe in the Good News.... God treats our choices more carefully than we often do. Pay attention and live all the moments of life and be compassionate in all things, big and small. You’re never too old or never too young to be part of the big story of God.”

A video stream of worship services from the symposium can be accessed online at <www.calvin.edu/worship>.



Pope Benedict XVI.

the five weeks of Lent is justice, both the human understanding of justice and the justice of God.

In common usage, the Pope said, justice “implies ‘to render to every man his due.’”

Church

Two Obama appointments raise Christians' concerns

Marian Van Til, with files from LifeNews, National Catholic Register, Pew Forum, WhiteHouse.gov

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Earlier this month, for the second time, the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee postponed a vote on the nomination of Dawn Johnsen to head the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel. Johnsen's nomination by President Obama encountered opposition from Catholic leaders who pointed out her involvement in an effort to strip the Catholic Church of its tax-exempt status if its bishops continue to voice their opposition to legal abortion.

Marjorie Dannenfelser of the Susan B. Anthony List recounts, "In 1988, attorney Dawn Johnsen argued that the Catholic bishops needed to choose between either having the Catholic Church stripped of its tax-exempt status as a religious organization or keeping their opposition to abortion to themselves. The Catholic bishops defeated Dawn Johnsen in the Supreme Court case *United States Catholic Conference v. Abortion Rights Mobilization*." Dannenfelser notes that after that case was concluded, "Dawn Johnsen was rewarded for her legal work on the case by being granted the position of legal director of the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), where she worked from 1988 – 1993."

"Nominating Dawn Johnsen to head the Office of Legal Counsel is an insult to pro-life Americans," Congressman Steve King of Iowa said. "Her personal pro-abortion agenda, previous disparaging comments about pro-life Americans and past criticism of Congress's ban on partial-birth abortion are evidence that she is not interested in finding common ground with those who oppose her narrow philosophy," he said.

Last March Johnsen made it through the Senate panel on a party-line vote but Republican lawmakers opposed Johnsen primarily over her extreme pro-abortion views. She has called women "fetal containers," comparing pregnancy with slavery, calling pregnant women "losers in the contraceptive lottery" and comparing pro-lifers to the Klu Klux Klan.

Rep. King said he hoped Obama would withdraw

Johnsen's nomination, which could die on the Senate floor if newly elected Republican Senator Scott Brown of Massachusetts agrees to support a filibuster. At the end of 2009, the Senate returned her nomination



Dawn Johnsen (L) and Harry Knox (R).

to the White House but President Obama promptly re-nominated her in January.

If confirmed, Johnsen would be in charge of the office that formulates the attorney general's formal opinions and provides counsel on the thorniest legal questions. The election of Scott Brown in Massachusetts was thought to be the death knell for Johnsen's nomination because it would again give opponents enough votes to uphold a filibuster against her – but Obama re-nominated Johnsen anyway.

Johnsen served in the Clinton administration as the Acting Assistant Attorney General heading the Office of Legal Counsel from 1997-1998 and as Deputy Assistant Attorney General from 1993-1996. She also served on the Clinton transition team in 1992.

'Hurting people in the name of Jesus'

Another appointment creating renewed controversy among Catholics and other Christians is that of Harry Knox as a member of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. That office was formed last year in February by Obama's executive order so that it would "work on behalf of Americans committed to improving their communities, no matter their religious or political beliefs."

Knox was named to the group last April. His appointment caused consternation then among many Christians, but the controversy was recently renewed when he said that Pope Benedict "is hurting people in the name of Jesus" because the Pope opposes handing out condoms as a means of stopping the spread of AIDS. Knox has also called the Pope and Catholic bishops "discredited leaders" because of their opposition to same-sex "marriage," and the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic fraternal service organization, he called "foot soldiers of a discredited army of oppression."

Knox recently said he won't retract a statement he made in 2007 when he asserted that the Catholic Church had committed an act that was "immoral and insulting to Jesus," by denying the Eucharist to a lesbian couple in Wyoming. Knox is himself a gay activist and director of the Human Rights Campaign's Religion and Faith Program.

U.S. House of Representatives minority leader John Boehner (R.-Ohio) said after Knox's "hurting people in the name of Jesus" statement, "He should resign. And I have agreed to sign a letter [to the President.] We can't have in the White House an anti-Catholic bigot, and that's what this gentleman appears to be." It wouldn't be Boehner's first letter on the subject. Last May after Knox's appointment Boehner signed a letter with nearly two dozen prominent Catholics calling on Obama to remove Harry Knox because of his history of anti-Catholic statements. So far, President Obama has not budged, though other critics have also pointed out that Knox's attitudes are diametrically opposed to the spirit and purpose of the office to which he was appointed.

Nova Scotia church takes a long trip south

Marian Van Til, with files from UPI, DJ

HALIFAX (UPI) — A two-centuries old church building in Nova Scotia has been disassembled and shipped to Louisiana to replace one destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

All Saints Anglican Church in the rural town of Granville Centre became "redundant" in 2005 when three area parishes combined into one. So the building had been vacant since that time. Because it rested in the midst of a cemetery

the land with the church on it could not be sold.

The purchase price and moving costs weren't released. It took about two weeks to dismantle the church building and load it onto trucks for the trip south. The church has been reassembled in Abita Springs, Louisiana, and is now the home of a Baptist congregation. Abita Springs is a town of about 2000 people in southeastern Louisiana, near the Gulf area – and in the path of hurricanes like Katrina.

Some local historians were upset with the move, reports said. It would have made more sense to launch a fundraiser for the Louisiana Baptists than selling them a historic church, said one. Though the white church building looks simple, even austere, researcher and architectural historian Peter Coffman of Dalhousie University told the (Halifax) *Chronicle-Herald* that its style – the temple facade doorway and round-arched windows – can be traced back to ancient Greece and Rome. It is an "architectural gem," he said.

To mark the church's history in Granville Centre a monument that includes the original bell will be built at the cemetery where the church formerly stood.



The church steeple, partially disassembled.



The All Saints Anglican Church of Granville Centre.

Lent

Christ's face; our faces

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Most Sunday afternoons, Neil sits with my husband and me during the worship service. Neil has Asperger Syndrome, an autism spectrum disorder. One of the characteristics of this condition is repetitive behavioural patterns. When the mike is passed around for prayer requests, Neil thrusts up his hand and often requests that we pray for Jesus' swift return. He wants to see Jesus. God has used Neil's repetitive requests to grow my longing to see the glory of the "Righteous One" (Isa. 24:16a) face-to-face.

That will be possible someday, but it isn't possible now, and it wasn't possible in the past.

God turns away

Still, Moses said to God, "Now show me your glory" (Ex. 33:18). I'm amazed at his boldness, aren't you? It seems like an outrageous request. What is more surprising is that God gives Moses what he asks for, as far as is possible in this present age: "And the Lord said, 'I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But,' he said, 'you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.' Then the Lord said, 'There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen'" (Ex. 33:19-23).

Later, after Moses had received the two tablets of the Testimony and returned to the people, his face radiated God's glory. So dazzling was his appearance that the people were afraid to come near him. So, he covered his face with a veil (Ex. 34:29-35).

We turn away

Though Moses could not see God's face and live, in the fullness of time, in Bethlehem, "the world's Redeemer first revealed his sacred face!" (*Psalter Hymnal*, CRC Publications, 1989, #342). Jesus was God in human flesh – God with a human face.

Mary and Joseph must have peered lovingly at Jesus' face. They knew his face intimately, the way loving parents know the face of their child.

Later, as Jesus preached, taught, healed the sick and called sinners to repentance, the twelve disciples and his followers saw his face day by day. They witnessed the emotions that played over his features – love, compassion, anger, disappointment, surprise, and gratitude. They saw the face of the Word who became flesh and made his dwelling among them. They saw his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who

came from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

But, as Isaiah foretold, people turned against him: "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised" (Isa. 53:3).

It's hard to grasp, isn't it? First, humans weren't allowed to see God's face. Then God did something so radically new that no one has ever been able to entirely grasp its significance. God sent Jesus to display his face on earth. But then the people turned their faces away from him.

We, too, have despised and rejected Jesus. We have spit in his face each time we failed to trust him, to love others as he does, and to proclaim his glory in our homes, neighbourhoods and nation.

We all crucified Jesus.

He turns to us

Thank God, that's not the end of the story. On Easter morning, downcast, despondent faces were transformed into radiant, joyful ones.

The women who came to Jesus' tomb to anoint him with oil discovered that his body was missing. "While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!'" (Luke 24:4-6a).

Through God's power, Jesus lifted up frightened, fallen people "with their faces to the ground." In the process, our faces have been changed. Now "we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18). How amazing that our faces reflect God's glory!

But the good news doesn't stop there. Paul wrote, "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face" (1 Cor. 13:12a). Imagine seeing Jesus' face, which is "like the sun shining in all its brilliance" (Rev. 1:16b).

Until that day arrives, cherish the Aaronic benediction through all the redeemed seasons of your life: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26). ✨

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema is a freelance writer living in St. Catharines, ON. She has recently published her first children's picture book, *Monzi and Mama's Stories*, which can be ordered at sonyavf55@hotmail.com



FASTNACHTS FOR SHROVE TUESDAY

Susan Dewing

There are many days during the Lenten season that we hold important, culminating in Easter Sunday, that glorious day when our precious Saviour rolled away the stone covering the entrance to his tomb. God the Father gave life to his son once more, so we all may look forward to the day we, too, will rise. So important, many call this day Resurrection Sunday. Before this day can happen, though, we remember three days before, when Jesus Christ hung on the cross and died, taking the sins of the world onto himself. It is important to us, and we call that day Good Friday.

The day before, he shared one last supper with his chosen twelve. This night, so special and yet so sad, we call Maundy Thursday. Jesus gave us his blood and body so we could always remember his sacrifice for us. A week before was Palm Sunday, when riding on a donkey, the Messiah rode into Jerusalem as the people triumphantly threw palm branches on the road in front of him. Many of us have palm fronds in our churches to remind us of our Redeemer's journey. Often, we burn the fronds the next year, and the ashes are placed on our foreheads in the sign of a cross, to again remind us what the Lord went through for his people. This day, approximately 40 days before Easter, we call Ash Wednesday. During the coming days, we fast and pray, remembering his suffering.

The Tuesday before Ash Wednesday is known as Shrove Tuesday, from the word shrove, which means forgiven. It is typically a day of feasting in preparation for Lent.

My mother's ritual

Why am I telling you all of these things you already know? Firstly, I am a Baptist, and I was a Methodist, and though we are members of different denominations, many of us hold these traditions in common.

However, if you grew up in York County, Pennsylvania (like I did), Shrove Tuesday would have had a special ritual. My family is Pennsylvania Dutch. (We're not from the Netherlands. Early settlers thought our "*deutsch*" meant "Dutch.") We are a people who love food, though many of our recipes make others grimace. But we do make a delicious dessert on Shrove Tuesday, called fastnachts.

These are doughnuts made with potato yeast. They are heavy and coarse, but we do love them so! They seem fairly simple, but they take time to make. I'd like to share with you how my mother made hers.

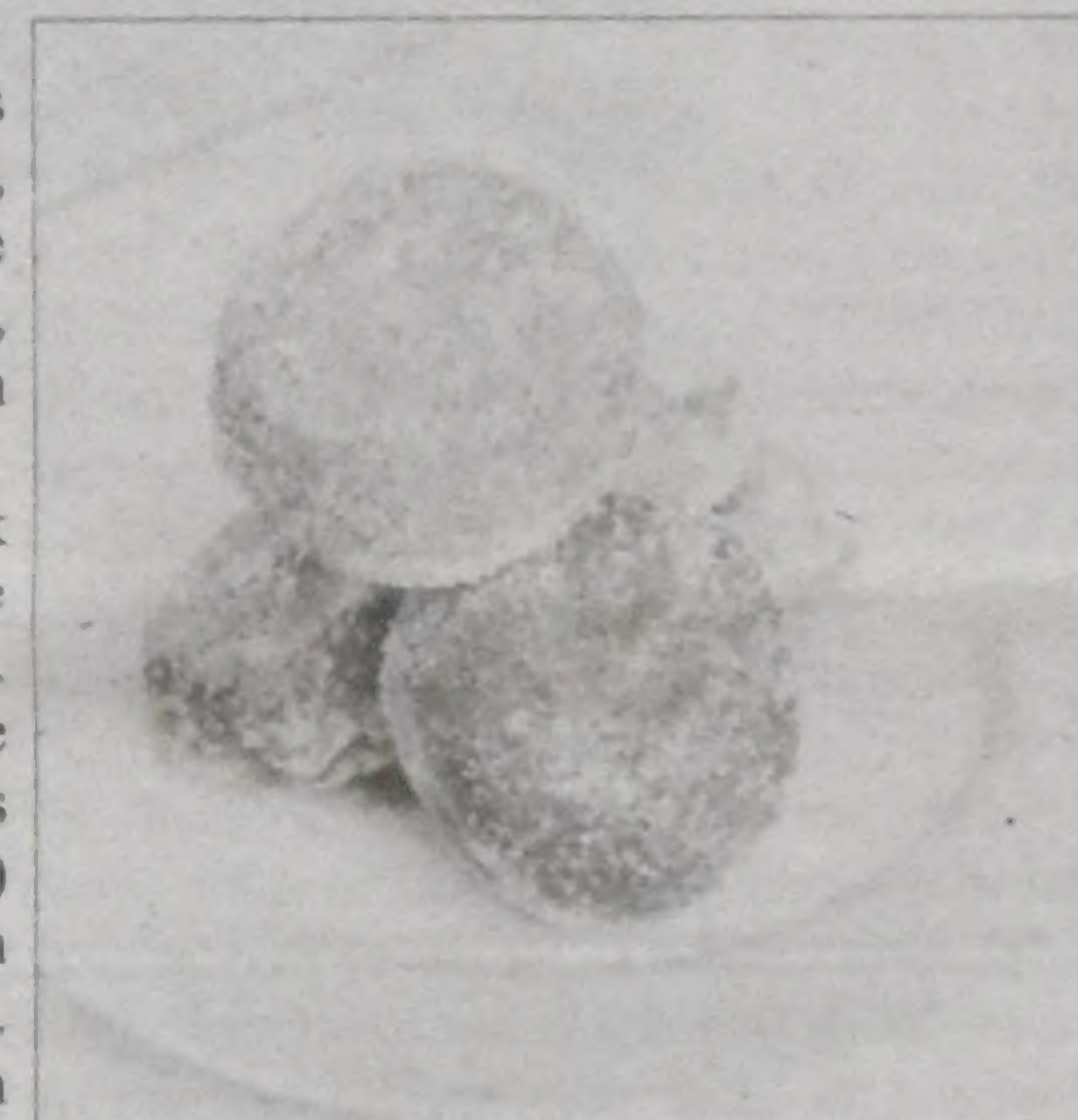
She would begin on Monday by boiling a large peeled potato, reserving the water as well as the potato for use in the recipe. Once the dough was worked, it would sit until night. It is important (if you want to do things the way my mother did) that you use a large bowl, covered with a plastic shower cap. We reserved the cap for this purpose because it fit so perfectly. Before bed, my mother would punch down the dough and let it rise, again covered with the shower cap, until morning. Then, it was rolled out about an inch thick and cut into circles or random shapes (I always thought the shapes tasted best). The next bit was also crucial. She would cover the old wooden ironing board with towels. She would flour the towels and put the raw fastnachts there to rise until double in size. Then, finally, they were fried in a deep pan or a fryer until deep brown.

Using hot oil created quite a dilemma for my mother. We'll never know what happened to Mom to make her so worried, but it was part of the custom to fret vocally when passing on her recipe. Her fear: we would all burn our houses down. I have certainly heard the warnings many times, and when my son, Brett, first made them himself, she didn't want me to allow him to try. Every year she worried until Shrove Tuesday was over with everyone's houses intact.

Here is the last important step. Put confectioner's sugar in a large paper bag. Put in three fastnachts at a time, and shake, shake, shake! Open the bag, and pull out your beautifully warm, sweet fastnachts. Keep the bag to reuse whenever you eat fastnachts. Remember, though, no matter how much you love them, my mother would only make them once a year – on Shrove Tuesday. However, she would make a huge batch and reheat them in the oven, wrapped in foil, every night until they were gone. Many people give something up for Lent. My family never followed that tradition. If we did, though, it would never be fastnachts!

I have many other memories of Easter in Pennsylvania Dutch country, which I'll share with you in the March 22 issue of *Christian Courier*! ✨

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Lent

Two aspects of Lent, part I of II

Frank Sawyer

I would like to discuss two paintings by a Hungarian artist on themes relating to Lent. Both paintings illustrate a biblical scene as interpreted by the artist and painted around the year 1900. The artist, Karoly Ferenczy (1862-1917), belonged to a group of painters from the School of Nagybanja, a town in Transylvania where they established a centre.

Ferenczy's paintings often combine nature and human persons in a scene which expresses more than a visual approach and indeed more than the usual approach. His colours are strong and his style solid, realistic, but by no means photographic. He is generally counted as an impressionist painter and was one of the most qualified of his time. This artist wants to interpret things, not merely portray things, and one immediately feels a process of thought behind his best works.

Betrayal

In the painting called "The Selling of Joseph", Ferenczy sets the theme of betrayal in an appropriate landscape: the barren colours speak of a



"The Selling of Joseph" by Karoly Ferenczy.

barren event. The scene is based on Genesis 37. Joseph's brothers assume a variety of roles in the painting. Some are participating, and some have withdrawn; some approve, and some disapprove but do not have the power to save the day.

Joseph is posed like an innocent lamb being led to the slaughter. Only he looks at the viewers – you and I – with the question, how is this possible? The others cannot look us in the face because they are all guilty. The salesmen (that is, some of Joseph's brothers) are too busy with their slave trade and do

not look further than the deal at hand and the demands of this market enterprise. In any case, it would be too embarrassing to think that there might be viewers, then, and even millennia later. Those buying the slave have no need to look further – they are only picking up a good deal.

The older brother Rueben had tried to save Joseph's life by having him cast in the cistern so that he could come back later to help him. As the plot unfolds it was Judah who said they should sell Joseph rather than kill him. In the painting these helpful

brothers look askance on this event and almost look toward the viewers for help. But we are just as powerless as they are. The pigment is set.

The barren land suits the occasion. On my desk I have a stone from the vicinity of Mount Sinai, a burnt reddish brown colour which reminds me of the desert as a

barren land but also as the place of divine revelation, blooming forth as the desert also does in some seasons. In the painting there is water visible, and all would be different if this could be applied. But salvation history has its times and seasons.

Notice the sky. It is calm and almost happy. The perspective from above, from eternity, sees what even Joseph the dreamer and his brothers the schemers do not see. What was intended for harm turned out to be God's way of providing hope for his people (Genesis 45:5-8).

Meanwhile, it is Lent. The sale of Joseph prefigures the betrayal of Jesus who was also sold to captors. The brothers selling Joseph prefigure the selling of Jesus by Judas and the general betrayal by the disciples: "Then all the disciples deserted Jesus and fled" (Matthew 26:56). In the painting Joseph looks helpless, lonely, hurt, betrayed. This is also the meaning of Lent. We all

have betrayed our Lord. The very aloneness of Joseph is the aloneness of Christ on the cross, even abandoned by the divine Father. The sky above Golgotha became black.

Yet in the wisdom of the divine plan God meant it for our good: the barren event bares providential results.

Continued next issue

Fastnachts

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 cup mashed potato | 1 cup sugar |
| 1 cup water (cooled after boiling the potato in it) | .2 cakes yeast, dissolved in 1 cup warm water |
| 1/2 cup shortening | 2 eggs |
| bread flour | 1 teaspoon salt |

Mix shortening, eggs and potato. Add potato water and yeast mixture. Work in enough flour to form a stiff batter. Let stand until night. Punch down and add salt. Let rise until morning. Roll out about 1/2 inch thick and cut. Let rise until double in size. Fry in fat until brown. Shake in confectioner's sugar and eat warm.

Note: This recipe and more can be found on our website. Go to: www.christian-courier.ca and click on Reader Resources.

ALONE IN THE DESERT

Deserted by brothers
alone in the desert
where no flowers bloom
the landscape is barren

this future of gloom
is foreboding:
and no one bothers
to ask why this scheme
of lies was devised and applied.

Joseph's strange dream
was unusually bold and
yet what was prophesied
came to fulfilment.

Lent is always an opaque event.
Forlorn, barren and painful.
We mourn.

The way of God can be denied
for a time and the lamb
can be led to the slaughter
by means of denial and lies.

Yet what we devise is not always
gainful.

The heavens see further into the
future:
they seek for good all our days.
Let dark mourning turn to
shalom and laughter –
it is time to relent and give
praise.

Worthy is the Lamb always.

Opinions

Co-owning the Earth

Bert Hielema

Is God green?

In front of me, on my messy desk, I have a pile of books (let's see, 1, 2... there are 14 of them), all having one theme in common: Christian stewardship. The writers are from the diverse crannies and crevices of the church: Roman Catholic (Father Thomas Berry), Lutheran (Larry L. Rasmussen), Christian Reformed (Calvin College sponsored), United Church of Canada, Presbyterian, and so on. One of the writers is Tony Campolo, who titles his book *How to Rescue the Earth without Worshipping Nature*.

You know by now that I am quite the opinionated old man, so it may come as no surprise to you that, in my at-times-not-so-humble opinion, all these men, and one woman (Sally McFague – no two, Aileen van Beilen worked on the Calvin project) miss the point. Dr Campolo's book title already suggests that we can be the victor in fighting pollution. So no wonder that he writes that "with some help from St Francis and Teilhard de Chardin, we just might make it." Make what? Learn to live so that Jesus does not have to return to make all things new? In his concluding remarks he writes that, "The environment has an awesome resilience if we just give it a chance". Granted, he wrote these lines 20 years ago. Maybe today he has a different view.

In Earthkeeping, Christian Stewardship of Natural Resources (also an ancient book), all by people of the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship with such writers as Calvin De Witt, Loren Wilkinson, Aileen

Van Beilen and others, I detect a similar optimism. Here is what these good people conclude: "Yet Christians have the power in Christ to redeem the human character from its perversity and lead it into a new life in which stewardship, husbandry, and nurturing vulnerability is 'natural'.... Only then can we hope to become good and just stewards of the creation which God has placed under our care." Don't we believe in original sin anymore? This sounds very much like Teilhard de Chardin, a Roman Catholic Jesuit priest and also a geologist, who taught that humanity is in a continuous process of evolution toward a perfect spiritual state. His writings were later banned by the Vatican.

Heaven, is it the end of the world?

I wonder, "Do the Calvin people mean that all of earth-dwellers will become One Hundred Percent Green Christians?" Or do I read this wrong? Since this was written I have often heard Calvin De Witt speak, and have questioned him closely, as recently as two years ago at a conference at the University of Minnesota. He still leaves the impression that human action can safeguard the future.

So how does a Roman Catholic priest view all this? Father Thomas Berry has written *The Dream of the Earth*, a book of which Dr Donald B. Conroy, President of the North American Conference on Religion and Ecology, says, "This volume is quite possibly one of the most important books of the



Bonhoeffer in Tegel prison yard, 1944.

twentieth century". In some ways Berry reminds me of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who wrote in his essay "Creation and Fall," "In my entire being, in my creatureliness, I belong completely to this world.... God, brother and sister and the earth belong together," except that with Berry God is not included. Berry and Campolo openly base their optimism on Teilhard de Chardin who has had a tremendous impact on many people, including the former PM Paul Martin, even though the Roman Catholic Church declared him a heretic.

Some of my other books are *Caring for Creation; The Earth is the Lord's; Project Earth, Preserving the World God Created; Cherish the Earth: the Environment and Scripture; Earth Community, Earth Ethics; God as Nature Sees God; Life Abundant; and God is Green*. They all offer good tips on how to live as Christians, but strikingly, none point explicitly to the New Earth under a New Heaven so vividly described in Revelation 21. Campolo hints at it, but it seems to me that the Heaven thing is still uppermost in peoples' mind.

No wonder: I too was spoon-fed on heaven. Already in Kindergarten I sang "Sluit U aan, Sluit U aan, wie mee wil naar de hemel gaan," "Get in line, Get in line, then follow the 'to heaven' sign."

The Kingdom concept

What I miss in all these books is "The Kingdom" concept.

Only two writers make this the centre of their thinking. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, killed by the Gestapo days before the end of World War II, in his *Thy Kingdom Come*, wrote that "The function of the church is to witness to the resurrection of Christ from the dead...and to the power of God in the new Creation." I find that theme also in Dr. J.H. Bavinck, who said, "The Bible shows on every page that the meaning of creation is focused on the one overriding theme: that creation is dominated by one marvelous motif, the motif of the Kingdom of God.... It is in the End Time, in the Great Day that is coming, that Yahweh will reveal His kingly-powers when He will forever banish all influences which have had such destructive and ruinous effects on His beloved world." To me this means that "Where there is no Kingdom vision, the people perish." ✂



Bert Hielema (bert@hielema.ca) lives in a solar passive house, with 10 active solar panels. See <http://hielema.ca/blog>.

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

Unable to move beyond the venting stage?

True friends are one of life's greatest gifts. Good friends who listen to us without judgement. Friends we can laugh and cry with. Friends who lighten the load as we tumble through life. Friends who love and accept us even though we sometimes muck up our lives.

Q: I am happily married with three adult children who are making their way into the world. Consequently, I have more time now to spend with four very close friends. We have known each other for twenty years and enjoy casual lunches for birthdays, potluck dinners with our spouses as a group, as well as getting together on the spur of the moment for coffee. We also enjoy one-on-one chats when someone needs to unload or come to grips with something in her life. In the last four months, whenever we get together for lunch or coffee...the discussions have been dominated by a friend who keeps wanting to talk about the "wrong" done to her by her in-law family. She keeps going over every detail and cannot seem to let it go. We have all tried to help her process her issue, but

she does not seem to want to move beyond the venting stage, giving a constant negative flavour to our get-togethers.



A: First, let me stress that *you* are asking for advice – not your friend who continues to be troubled by the past. Consequently, my advice will be about your hesitancy to be direct with her, and I will suggest some questions you may want to ask your friend. Second, let me commend you for wanting to resolve this difficulty. The beauty of ongoing

friendship throughout one's lives cannot be overrated.

Recently, I read a story about three childhood friends. All three were in their mid-forties. One of them said what kept them together was they would never say anything hurtful to each other. The first thing that came to my mind was their relationship was somewhat superficial. Still, they seemed to be content with simply enjoying one another's company. I believe there is nothing wrong with this, unless someone wants the relationship to be different.

For you, I am curious about your group's dynamics. Your friend's inability to "move on" and the negative flavour it brings to your gatherings seem to be an anomaly, not something that happens on a regular basis.

Furthermore, I am wondering about your hesitancy after knowing one another for twenty years. Is there something about her that implies there is a risk in leveling with her? Or, are you perhaps not comfortable with possible conflict?

My suggestion is for a one-on-one discus-

sion with her so the conversation can have some depth. Clearly state the problem. Let her know all of you empathize with her in terms of her difficulty with her in-law family. Also, ask her if there is anything concrete at this time you and your friends can do for her so she can get beyond where she is now. Next, ask her what it would take to put this painful experience behind her. If she expects others to change so that she can go on with her life she will be barking up the wrong tree. In other words, how could she help herself, in terms of what she has control over, so that she can move forward.

Freeing ourselves from pain forces us to look inside in ways that challenge us to grow. Over time, the struggle will help us appreciate the richness of life. There is no doubt deep friendships take some effort, but the blessings we reap from these relationships colour our lives with joy. ✂

Arlene Van Hove (avanhove@shaw.ca) is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC.



Pastoral Excellence

The cost of not caring for your Pastor

Rachel Boehm

A pastor's care can be costly, and the expense is not salary-related. Many pastors simply pay too high a price to practice their profession. It's a condition common among the helping professionals – sometimes referred to as the "cost of caring."

Rev. Bob Zomermaand, a retired Christian Reformed Church (CRC) parish pastor, has personal experience with care-related costs. "I myself fell victim to the temptation to work too much," wrote Zomermaand in his article "Caring for Pastors." "I became fatigued in my spirit, in my emotions and my body. As a result, I lost my ability to be a useful tool in the Lord's hand. The very thing I so desired to be and to do was beyond my reach. I was finally diagnosed with something I had never heard of: compassion fatigue."

Tired of doing good?

In his article "Compassion Fatigue: An Introduction," author Charles R. Figley, Ph.D., who works with the Florida State University Traumatology Institute, points to research showing that those who care for others often end up traumatized by the experience. Citing many studies that look at the emotional well-being of workers in the caring professions – from clinical therapists to trauma workers – Figley concludes, "Those who work with the suffering suffer themselves because of the work." *

So why does this type of burn-out occur? Author Peter Richter attributes experiences like Zomermaand's to the loss of reciprocity in social interaction. "In other words," he says, "we give much more than we get back." According to James O. Davis, president of Global Pastors Network, 20 percent of pastors experience serious stress and burn-out, and it seems that many of them might be giving a lot and getting little in return. The result is compassion fatigue, and the costs pile up. Decreased performance, stress leave, physical and mental illness and troubled relationships top the list of devastating outcomes caused by compassion fatigue. Divorce is common, as is early departure from the ministry.

With costs like these, churches can't afford NOT to look at restoring the reciprocity of pastor-church relationships. A survey recently conducted by the CRC's Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) project was designed to do just that. This survey asked churches throughout

the U.S. and Canada to identify and share ways in which they support their pastor and the pastor family. "We hope that the findings from this survey will be a source of inspiration and motivation to all churches in finding ways of better caring for their pastors," says Lis Van Harten, Director of SPE.

Compensation, benefits and Performance Review

Survey results mentioned pastor's compensation, benefits and expense re-imbursement prominently in providing effective pastor care. In addition, churches identified ways to enhance a pastor's traditional compensation package, including:

- designating budget for continuing education and book allowance
- offering regular Sundays off in addition to normal vacation
- providing annual funding for conferences and retreats
- meeting annually to discuss compensation and address pastors' concerns
- providing a hospitality allowance
- offering Christian school tuition subsidies
- paying for professional development and extended study leave

Formal processes for performance review and sermon evaluation also figured prominently in survey results. A pastor, like any employee, wants – and needs – feedback. One church explained, "We utilize a personnel committee to encourage our pastor's contributions and growth through a formal performance management approach, setting yearly goals and assessing results at year's end."

Support in Ministry

Survey results showed that caring for the pastor means providing help in getting the work of the church done. For example, churches noted many ways in which they share the demands of planning and leading worship, including:

- creating a roster of individuals to lead prayers, deliver children's messages, read scriptures and take on other worship duties.
- appointing worship leaders and/or worship teams so pastor can focus on preaching.

Churches also try to lighten their pastors' workloads by:

- empowering church members to share in pastoral care.
- sharing responsibilities for teach-

ing catechism and new members' classes.

- encouraging regular pulpit exchanges during busy times.

Pastor-Church relations

Survey results showed that formal attention to the pastor-church relationship is crucial for pastor care. To that end, many churches suggested the value of forming a pastor-church relations committee to support the pastor, oversee the annual performance review process, and – where needed – mediate between pastor and council. Other churches appoint a pastoral care committee as well, providing a confidential place for pastor and spouse to discuss joys and concerns.

Peer groups and mentoring

Supporting pastors to get involved in peer groups and mentoring opportunities also came up frequently in the survey. From encouraging participation in local ministerial associations to enabling peer group involvement, opportunities like these are well worth the investment. "Encouraging our pastor to be a part of a peer-learning group was both personally supportive for the pastor and good for our church," one respondent explained.

Prayer

Pastors pray for the church, but who prays for the pastor? SPE's survey showed that churches value the role of prayer in pastor care. Churches formalize that ministry in various ways, including:

- appointing members to meet weekly with the pastor to pray.
- scheduling council members to pray for the pastor one day per week.
- forming a team to pray for the pastor before worship services.

One congregation got especially creative, noting, "We provided our pastor with a pager, and the congregation pages him every time they pray for him."

Sabbatical

Sabbaticals provide a change or a break from the normal routine and an opportunity for pastors to step back, reflect, relax, recharge and renew. Many churches identified sabbatical as an essential tool in caring for the pastor. "We have a generous sabbatical policy," one church explained. "Our pastor just completed a six-month sabbatical in which our council urged him to

Continued on page 14



Flourishing pastors.
Healthy congregations.
We need both.

Here's what pastors are saying
about SPE peer learning groups:

"The peer group was one of the best things that I've done to be refreshed and to help evaluate my life and ministry."

"Our group was awesome."

"We would all agree that at each of our peer group meetings something unexplainable happens as we share and discuss and pray. And all of us leave those meetings with our tanks full."

Sound good?

For more information contact us
by phone toll free at 877-279-9994 X0805
by email pastoralexcellence@crcna.org
or visit www.crcna.org/pastoralexcellence

S U S T A I N I N G
Pastoral
E X C E L L E N C E

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Corinthians

Communism: more *bourgeois* than Christianity

I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 1 Cor. 15:50

A. A. Van Ruler



This declaration by Paul is usually seen as a bold polemic of resistance against the Jewish beliefs about the resurrection. That belief was characterized by stark realism and materialism. A person's personhood was particularly seated in the body as body. One still had the bones – even of long-dead people. These same

bones could therefore be dressed once again with flesh. Many are of the opinion that Paul argues vehemently against this in this passage – as their interpretation of “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” That very same opinion, of course, is reason for those adhering to it, to conclude that second-century Christians were wrong and were arguing against Paul when they stated in the Apostles' Creed, “I believe in the resurrection of the body.”

However, I believe that one should be a bit careful with such statements. Of course, we can only speak in metaphors about the last things. There is not the slightest suggestion of being literal. But that makes the choice of metaphor or image even more important. Based on that, it is very unlikely that Paul *here* is arguing against the realistic and

materialistic imagery of the Jewish idea of resurrection.

Not a realist?

Is the apostle then not a realist? And what's more, is he not a materialist? Is it not true that materialism is deeply embedded in all Christian thought and speech? This physical and palpable world of ours – isn't it God's creation? And if there is redemption, doesn't it ultimately affect our world, this world that we have and that we are? People are, as well, *bodies*. And isn't the body as much for the Lord as the Lord is for the body (1 Cor. 6:13)? We would hope that the apostle in his resurrection faith does not let go of physicality, our corporeal existence. That is the very core of his thinking – that there is a real resurrection and that it is out of death and that it relates to the real and complete person.

It's for that reason that I think we have to approach this statement a little differently. It is not meant as a terse argument against Jewish beliefs about the resurrection; it's an introductory remark for a new question.

Those who live

In what came before, Paul has dealt with all kinds of questions about our resurrection expectations. Now there is only one new question left: What happens to people who are still alive when the glorious Lord returns from heaven? So far, everything Paul has touched upon was about the dead. The whole question becomes an entirely different one when we ask ourselves what will happen to those who are alive.

Paul's answer assures us that it's not as simple a matter as we might think. One cannot say “Well, they're alive, so when the Lord returns and God's kingdom begins, they can

simply live on.” It is not that simple and easy, because the Lord's return is simply too great an event and God's kingdom a too colossal reality. This pertains to the redemption of the world as well as mankind! Even for those who are alive then a kind of resurrection from the dead will take place. It is not really a resurrection *of* the dead, but of the living. It is still a resurrection *from* the dead.

Let us never forget: We are, while in the midst of life, surrounded by death and contaminated with it in all different ways. We are mortal and subject to decay, we suffer and we are sick, we are limited and subject to pains and imperfections. And especially, we do not live according to the will of God, and we do not experience the world according to God's will. All these are the disguises of death. This limited, suffering and ill-equipped life the apostle calls “flesh and blood.”

This kind *cannot* inherit that kind of life. The living cannot simply continue to live as if it were business as usual. There is too much death. We are dealing here with holiness and glory! We are talking here about the holiness and glory of God! Glory that will become a visible and palpable reality! For that purpose this whole created reality must be redeemed even though it is still alive. And that whole created reality includes people.

All that is actually quite self-evident. But the apostle underscores it one more time by saying as well that what is perishable does not inherit what is imperishable. By definition, one might say, the one quite logically excludes the other. Whatever is perishable and whatever is flesh and blood is *against* God and cannot as such participate in the glorious kingdom.

Communism and Christianity

Whenever we try to translate these things into a modern form of speech, we touch upon an extremely important and current point. It is the question about the relationship between history and the *eschaton* being the end of all things, the ultimate aim of history. The question is if history is propelling itself in perfect continuity to its own end? Or must we look for change, transformation, redemption and resurrection from death?

It is these questions that put a chasm between communism and Christianity. Communism in its essence wants just one thing, namely the kingdom of God, the *eschaton* as *eschaton*, particularly relating to people in their perfect physicality and the world as perfect matter. That's where we are going, says communism. Oh yes, through all-upsetting revolution and through wars and – according to Chinese communism – even through a nuclear war. But still, the *eschaton* will come automatically as the period after the sentence.

Christianity offers an insurmountable difficulty here. Christianity says that revolutions and wars are small change as compared to the earth-shattering events that must take place for true redemption to come: the Lord's return, destruction of the present world, resurrection and judgment.

That does not mean that all must be spiritualized. Christianity also is materialistic, philosophically speaking. It interprets the *eschaton* fully as the end of history, but it also can fully sound the depths of all problems concerning mankind and its world. For that reason, too, it has a full grasp of the solution. Compared to Christianity, communism has something narrow-minded and bourgeois. ✂

Translated from the dutch by Bram Hoff of St. Catharines.

The cost of not caring for your Pastor *continued from p. 13*

take time for his own spiritual and physical renewal.” For more information about sabbaticals, please visit http://www.crcna.org/pages/spe_sabbaticals.cfm.

Staffing support

Sometimes the duties of a church can become too much for a single employee to handle. In that case, many churches decide to hire additional paid staff. “We employ a part-time worship planner to assist in worship planning and a part-time pastor of visitation to share responsibilities of visiting the elderly and shut-ins,” one survey respondent explained. Other churches noted that they hired church administrators or youth pastors to share the ministry workload.

Flexibility

Some churches care for their pastor by offering flexibility. For instance, they may allow the pastor to work from home or offer flex-time. Others limit evenings spent away from home. Many churches noted that it was important to allow the pastor freedom in deciding how to spend his or her time. “We allow our pastor to concentrate on those areas she is passionate about,” one respondent explained. Another church noted the importance of respecting the pastor's non-church recreational activities.

Pastor's spouse and family

Caring for the pastor involves caring for the pastor's spouse and family, too. Ways that churches said they care for the pastor's spouse and family included:

- funding for spouse to attend peer groups, conferences and/or retreats.
- funding and time off for family or couple retreats.
- including pastor's spouse and children in social activities of the church.
- supporting pastor's family in times of illness, crisis or loss.

- providing special treats for the couple or family such as meals, gift certificates, movie passes, babysitting services, etc.
- providing the means for the pastor to spend weekends away with spouse and/or family.
- ensuring that the pastor takes his or her full vacation and other designated time off
- forming a special team to support the pastor and family during relocation.

Appreciation and recognition

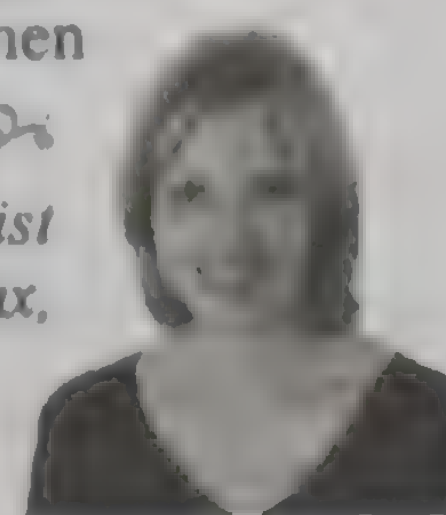
The survey made it clear that churches are creative in showing their appreciation to their pastors, from holding annual “Pastor Appreciation Sundays” to gift-giving. “We try to do something different each year,” one respondent explained. “Sometimes we give a special gift certificate or we send them away somewhere special for the weekend. It all depends on what is possible in any given year, but we truly love our pastor and he says that he ‘feels’ it.” Recognizing special birthdays, wedding anniversaries and years in ministry with cake, special events and gifts were also practical ways that churches showed care for their pastors.

Weighing the costs: Pastor care

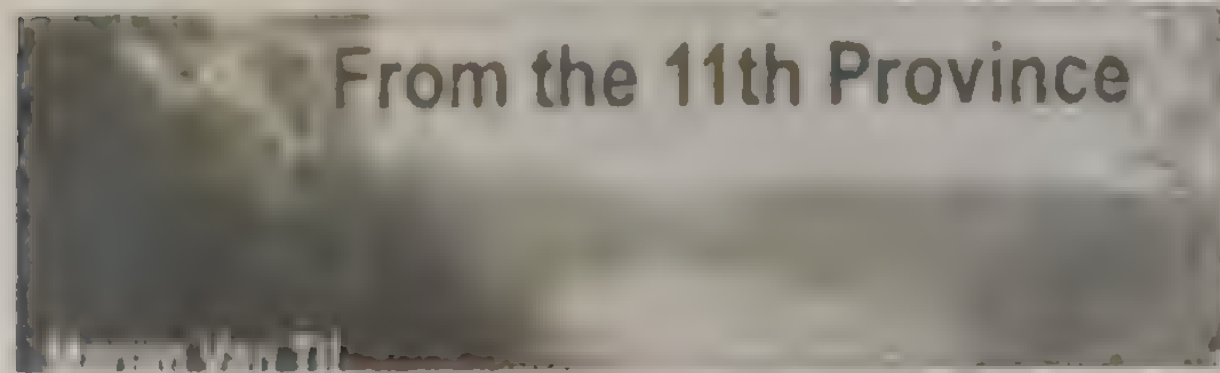
As the SPE survey shows – the survey summary will be posted on the CRC's SPE website soon – it does take an investment of time, attention and financial resources to care for a pastor well. It is pretty obvious, though, that this investment is a wise one, especially when compared with the costs of NOT caring. ✂

Rachel Boehm is a communications specialist and a freelance writer. She lives near Halifax, Nova Scotia, with her family.

For more on compassion fatigue, see p. 17



Arts



From the 11th Province

Lent, and a pilgrimage set to music

When I was young neither my family nor my Reformed church paid attention to Lent, that most Roman Catholic of seasons. Why wallow in Christ's suffering? Why use crucifixes instead of empty crosses? Why "give up something for Lent?" Another slightly superstitious ritual, right? So we asked ourselves, and we *knew* the answers.

Since then I've worked for years as an organist/choir director in denominations that have observed Lent for centuries: Anglican, Episcopal, Lutheran, even Catholic once. Lent hasn't simply "rubbed off on" me; I now consciously assent to its purpose.

Lent is a five- or six-week season which reiterates this biblical truth: if I am unaware "how great my sin and misery are," to quote the *Heidelberg Catechism*, I am incapable of knowing how much I need a Saviour and how great is God's grace in providing the Saviour. The message is judgement, yes, but beautifully interwoven with God's unfathomable mercy in the face of our deserved condemnation. So the ultimate focus is penitence, gratitude, obedience.

I now work in a Lutheran congregation that has maintained a high view of Scripture. The introduction to Lent that is among the worship resources that church provides lets you see why I am comfortable there: "These forty days called Lent are like no other. It is our opportune time to return to the God who rescues; to receive the gifts of God's grace;

to believe with the heart and confess with the mouth the wonder of God's love in Jesus; and to resist temptation at every turn. This is no small pilgrimage on which we have just embarked. It is a struggle Jesus knew. It is a struggle Jesus shares. The nearness of the Lord, in bread and wine, water and Word, will uphold and sustain us."

I now find Lent a not-to-be-missed opportunity to reorient myself to following Jesus as I ought, and to take that road with fellow believers, too. But for me as a "Reformed Lutheran" with a deep-seated love for music there's another Lenten resource I would hate to live without. It was bequeathed to the Christian world by a devout, biblically astute Lutheran and the greatest of all Western composers: J.S. Bach.

In Bach's *Passions* he invites his listeners along on his own musical-spiritual pilgrimage with Christ's suffering as told in the gospels of Matthew and John. *The St. Matthew Passion* is more famous, but the *St. John Passion* is perhaps more immediate, as is that Gospel written by the "disciple whom Jesus loved."

Getting under your skin

My husband and I listen to recordings of these works more than once every Lent, along with Handel's *Brookes Passion* and several others. But it is Bach's *Passions* that so get under one's skin, that bring tears

of sorrow, joy and beauty. This year I will experience the *St. John Passion* in a special way: Chorus Niagara, the symphony chorus in which I'm an alto, will perform it in Grimsby (Mountainview CRC, March 6, 7:30) and St. Catharines (Catholic cathedral, March 7, 3:00), and I was privileged to write the program notes. I invite readers in the Niagara Peninsula to join Bach and me and many fellow Christians on that pilgrimage (box office: 905-688-5550). Other readers might like to find a recording of this work.

I have no space to show with what profound insight Bach sets the text, partly from John and partly poetry, and chorales that dramatize and personalize the gospel narrative. I'll point out only the surprising opening and extraordinary ending. The opening is both beginning and summary: the orchestra roils and churns for 18 measures until the chorus enters, crying (in German) in mingled agony and ecstasy, "Herr! ["Lord!"] Herr! HERR!" – "Our Lord whose glory fills every land, show us through your Passion that you are God's true Son, for all time, even in being brought so low; that you are forever glorified."

After intently following Christ on his way of sorrow for nearly two hours we at last see his lifeless body removed from the cross. The chorus, standing for all Christian believers, sings, of all things, a lullaby to Jesus in the grave. If perhaps a bit too

extra-biblically fanciful for some, I find the combined text and music a profound expression of yearning, waiting faith, deliberately recalling Jesus' own words about death as "sleep." The rhythm gently rocks under a falling melodic line while we believers sing, "Rest well, beloved, sweetly sleeping, that I may cease from further weeping; and let me too, sleep well. The grave, which is prepared for you, from pain and grief set you free; and it will open heaven for me and close the gates of hell." There follows only a stark, rock-solid chorale which prays the *risen* Saviour to keep each of us in our final hour. We express the joy of seeing our Saviour and dearest Friend with our own eyes, and praising him eternally.

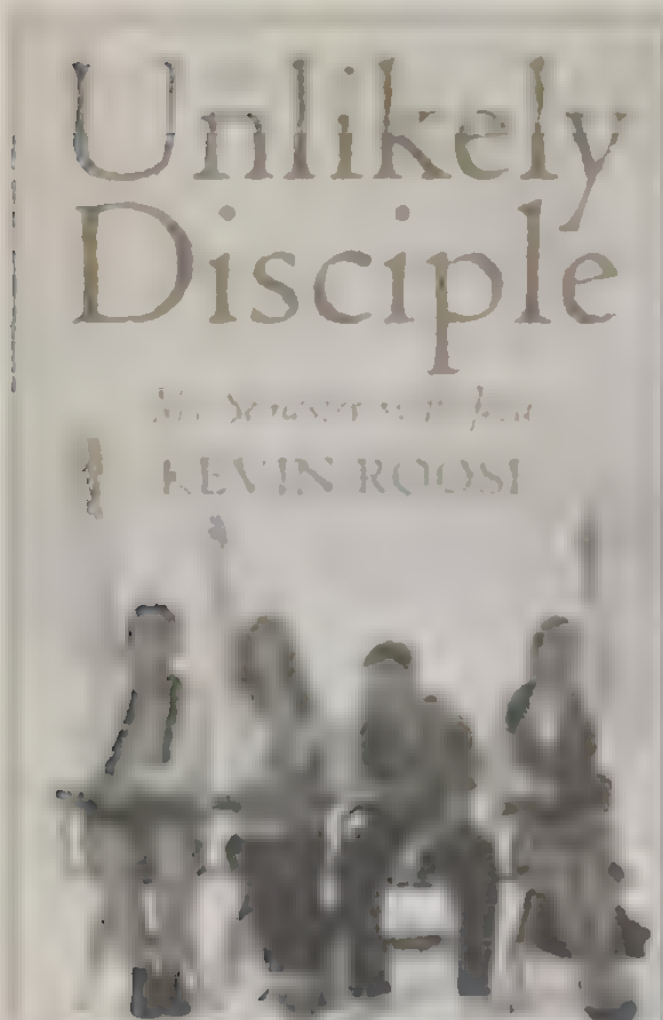
Slightly superstitious ritual? I think not!

Marian Van Til is a former C.C. editor who lives in Youngstown, NY, with her husband and five cats. Her book about life with cats, *Confessions of a Catholic*, was released on

Reformation Day. For a signed copy see <www.WordPowerPublishing.com> or write Marian at mvantil@roadrunner.com, or call 716-745-7073.



Note: See ad p.19 for symphony information.



Entertaining authors unaware

I recently heard Canadian author David Carpenter comment that "stories are created when a character meets his or her opposite." I couldn't help but agree as I thought of the

memoir I had finished reading that same morning in which a university sophomore raised in "the ultimate secular/liberal family" chooses to spend a semester at the world's largest Christian university. In *The Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner's Semester at America's Holiest University*, 19-year old Kevin Roose compares his semester at Liberty University in Virginia to the cross-cultural exchange trips which many university students take in order to broaden their horizons and learn how a group of people foreign to them see the world.

Roose chooses to venture into a subculture within his own country (conservative evangelicals), complete with a set of language, customs, values and beliefs so alien to his own. Having observed the "guarded interactions" many evangelicals have with non-Christians due to the obligation to witness, Roose recognizes that the only way to

truly understand the way people at Liberty honestly think, feel and act is to go "undercover" as one of them. So, after a crash course from a Christian friend in evangelical subculture (the curriculum including lessons in *Veggie Tales*, skimming the *Left Behind* novels, and quizzes on Bible characters), he moves onto Liberty's campus equipped with his shiny Jesus fish glued to his bumper and a collection of C. S. Lewis books in hand.

To be honest, I picked up this book expecting a scathing critical analysis of Liberty University with the rest of North American Christian academia thrown in (of course, "Christian academia" would be presented as an oxymoron). When I saw the book in the Christianity section of Chapters, I thought perhaps it was a shelving error, but having graduated from a Christian university and having spent a year in the heart of the American Bible Belt at an evangelical internship, I was more than intrigued to know the perspective of an outsider observing from the inside. I braced myself for the condemnation and as a reader was ready to take the approach that, while I might not agree with his perspective, it's always beneficial to know how the "outside world" sees us.

A wolf in sheep's clothing?

I was quickly and pleasantly surprised. Coming from a very liberal academic insti-

tution, Roose's intention is to humanize a group which has been perceived very negatively within his circles, harshly caricatured as arrogant and aggressive fundamentalists. Roose is truthful about the way the traditional Baptist views held by Liberty students and faculty clash with his own, but his tone is one of honesty and understanding rather than cynicism. While the book frequently critiques Liberty's academic style, the attitudes of students, and the political agenda and messages of founder and president, Reverend Jerry Falwell, he gives a fair and balanced perspective of the strengths and weaknesses of the institution and by extension, evangelical subculture. Roose finds himself impressed with the sense of genuine care within dorm life, the sense of discipline and happiness exhibited by students, and he is challenged in the way he views life, relationships and God. During his semester he develops close friendships which, according to his blog, are still intact today.

Liberty University initially banned the book, but after a committee review, chose to stock it (albeit with a three-paragraph disclaimer hanging above the copies), and I think it's admirable and crucial that they did. It takes humility so often missing in our circles in order to truly try to understand the way we are perceived, and a 300-page book provides Christians with the space to just

sit and listen without arguing or justifying our ways.

Someone I was describing the book to responded, "I think I would find that hurtful. How would you feel if someone wrote a critical review of your university?" Well, honestly, my natural reaction would be to get defensive at first. But as Christians we need to be open to hearing how our faith adherents are seen as a whole, not just the positive aspects of reaching the needy and showing unconditional love, but also the militancy, the intolerance and lack of critical thinking which is so often associated with the North American Church. This kind of inside-out review of evangelical subculture is at the least a tool to encourage us to re-evaluate our public image but hopefully does more than that in encouraging us to empathize with those outside of our faith circles, to be aware of our witness and to be reminded to always entertain strangers.



Melissa Kuipers (mckuip@gmail.com) lives in St. Catharines and teaches English at a Christian high school. She co-leads a club called *The Justice League* which raises awareness and funds for social justice issues.

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Obituaries

1 Peter 5:6-7

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 grandma in her 87th year.

SJOUKJE BYLSMA

She will be remembered by her
 children, grandchildren and
 great-grandchildren:

Diana & Bert Kingma, Stoney Creek
 Jeremy & Angela Kingma, Smithville
 (Tayle, Caleb) & Cadence
 Teresa Bylsma, London
 Annette Bylsma, London
 Rick & Jacqueline Bylsma, Strathroy
 Jason, Nicolis & Jaylynn
 Alice & Charly Salomons, Strathroy
 Kevin (& Sarah), London
 (Jules), Kai
 Brian & Melissa Salomons, Ailsa Craig
 London
 Scott Salomons, Strathroy
 Dennis Salomons, Strathroy

Predeceased by
 her husband, Tjibbe (Bill - 1994)
 son, Minco (Mike - 1980)
 and all her siblings: Anna Laanstra,
 Louwe DeGraaf, Jouke (Jim) De-
 Graaf, Gaele (Gary) DeGraaf, Tolly
 Streutker & Wiebe DeGraaf.

September 12, 1932 - January 15, 2010

Revelations 21:7

The Lord in his wisdom has called home
 to live with him in glory,
 our dear brother and brother-in-law,

STEWART KLAZINGA

Beloved husband of Janny Klazinga
 (nee: Venhuizen).
 May the Lord comfort his wife,
 children and grandchildren

Dennis & Tiete Klazinga, Wyoming, Ont.
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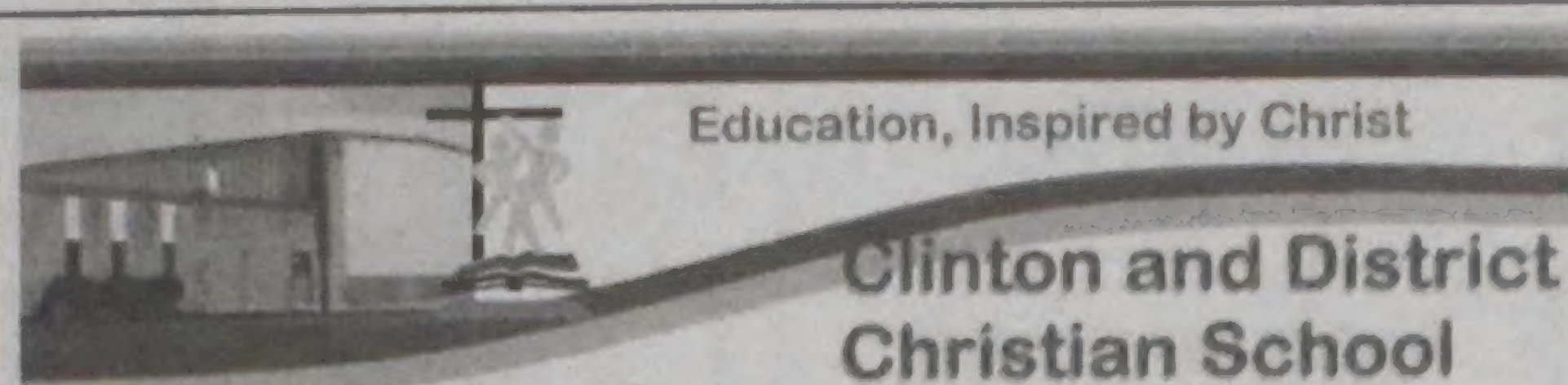
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Christ and compassion fatigue

I was reading over my journal today and came across this entry that I had jotted down during a summer recently spent in Central America:

"Yesterday, we traveled through several valley villages amidst the mountains outside of Tactic. We stopped at a school, and I walked around back to find a washroom. What I found and used nearly made me ill. A little hut made of wood and aluminum, over a hole in the ground that was covered only by a simple concrete seat. The 'door' was a couple sacks sewn together with a piece of wood at the bottom to weigh it down and keep it in place. Half of this 'door' was torn off, exposing whoever was inside. I held my breath the entire time for the odor."

Reading it again, I realize that something deep inside us is moved – and knows that we ought to be moved – by stories, accounts and images like that one. But chances are, you have heard it before. After a disaster like the recent earthquake, our mailboxes fill up with letters from charities, and in today's economy the needs are increased and the pleas all the more desperate. As much as we may try, we find that we are unable to react with the depth of spirit that is due the brokenness we see when it is multiplied in the way we are exposed to it today. We are inundated with it and simply become overwhelmed. And part of that is simply our humanity and our brokenness; we cannot extend the same compassionate response to everyone the same way we would to the few who are most near to us, and even when faced with

their suffering alone we are weighed down.

Compassion fatigue

Approaching the same issue from more technical terms, a number of studies have been done in recent decades regarding what has been called "compassion fatigue." The focus has largely been centered on two areas: the psychological changes incurred by those working with people in exceptional need and crisis situations (books of note here include Charles R. Figley's groundbreaking work *Compassion Fatigue* and the recently-published interfaith effort *Disaster Spiritual Care*, edited by Stephen B. Roberts and Willard W.C. Ashley) and the response to those situations by the international media, relief and development communities and, as a result, implications for the general public (though somewhat abrasive in its rhetoric, Susan D. Moeller's *Compassion Fatigue* is a helpful resource in this regard).

"Over-exposed" and "desensitized" are commonly-tossed-about words in the discussion, and for good reason. Already dated by decades, Bill Small, former president of NBC News, once noted that "a single copy of the [London] *Sunday Times* covers more happenings than an Englishman just a few hundred years ago could be expected to be exposed to in his entire lifetime." Our inability to respond to everything we are presented with far too often leads to a state where little or nothing we are presented with affects us at all. There is need, in our media-saturated societies, to relearn a healthy responsive-

ness to the sinful realities of this world.

Many have done well to suggest that compassion fatigue is by no means limited to extreme or disaster situations. In the realms of social work, health care, development and education (in short, any vocation involving interaction with others) we are constantly met with brokenness and suffering. As followers of Christ, we are called to respond, yet it is far too easy to become weighed down with concern for those we care for and overwhelmed by the sheer number of people who need care.

Waking from our fatigue

So what can be done? Central among the helpful areas of advice that have most often been given is that of being aware of limitation. Perhaps out of pride or perhaps out of honest intentions, we approach suffering and attempt to relieve it by our own means. It is when we are fully aware of our limitations, of our own brokenness, that we are able to be most effective in response to the pain we see. It is when we are fully aware of what little we can do on our own that we are most effectively used by God. And if we are not aware of our limitations, we will soon be made to be. It is the reality of our humanity.

Returning to my journal, I read on. Later in the course of the summer, still entirely aware of how little I could do and still feeling overwhelmed and pulled thin in my efforts to help, I spent some time reading the

words of Archbishop Oscar Romero. Having lived and served a few hundred kilometers away from where I sat, he himself was no stranger to suffering, injustice and disaster that demanded response. I wrote the following in my journal as well, a portion of what is attributed to be one of his most famous prayers (which, once you finish this article, you really ought to go read in its entirety):

"We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest."

Nick Schuurman (schuurman.nick@gmail.com) lives in an old townhouse beside the river in Cambridge, Ontario, where he studies Theology and Intercultural Studies. He has boarded

and worked a couple summers in a little Guatemalan village, among other places, and has a faithful but temperamental rabbit named Asha.



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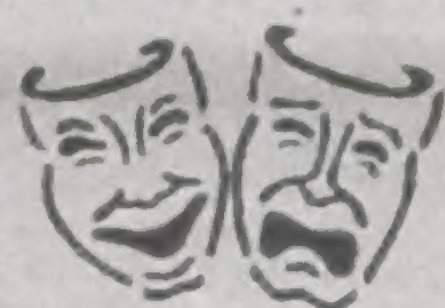
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Mar 6 The Annual Inter-Classis Safe Church Abuse Prevention Training Event will take place on Saturday from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at the Waterloo CRC. /www.scc.wmott.ca

Mar 12 The Wookstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "Mister Doe-Het Zelf" Market Centre Theatre, **Woodstock**. 8 p.m. See ad.

Mar 13 The Wookstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "Mister Doe-Het Zelf" Market Centre Theatre, **Woodstock**. 2:30 pm & 8 p.m. See ad

Mar 14 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3 p.m.

Mar 26 The Wookstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "Mister Doe-Het Zelf" at Great Lakes Christian College in **Beamsville** 8 p.m.

Apr 2 Grand Philharmonic Choir, Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, Howard Dyck, Conductor BACH Mass in B Minor; Good Friday, April 2, 2010, 7:30 p.m. Centre in the Square in **Kitchener**. Suzie Leblanc soprano, Laura Pudwell mezzo, Michael Schada tenor, Russell Braun baritone. Contact: Linie Broer, broer@csolve.net

Apr 9 The Wookstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "Mister Doe-Het Zelf" at the **London** Dutch Canadian Hall in **London**. See ad.

Apr 17 The Wookstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "Mister Doe-Het Zelf" at the Blyth Festival Theatre in **Blyth** 8 p.m. See ad.

June 26, 27 Come-celebrate the 50th anniversary of HCCS (formerly Athens Christian School). Contact www.hccs.ca or 613 498 4176.

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News

Faith statement draws fire:

Trinity Western accused of suppressing academic freedom

Angela Reitsma Bick

LANGLEY, BC – “All teaching, learning, thinking, and scholarship take place under the direction of the Bible.” That sentence, part of Trinity Western’s (TW) academic calendar, is echoed by educators at Christian grade schools, high schools and universities across Canada. It’s not normally a line that would raise eyebrows for being too controversial. In a country that encourages freedom of education, the debate is more often about whether religious schools deserve public funding and whether Christian universities qualify for accreditation.

But a recent report from the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) has taken issue with B.C.-based Trinity Western for something more basic – its Christian worldview – and for “imposing a requirement of a commitment to a particular ideology” on its professors, thus prohibiting academic freedom.

In October of 2009, CAUT created a list of institutions that require their faculty to sign faith statements; TW is the first under investigation, with Crandall University in Moncton, the Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, and Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ont. apparently next.

Thus far, the so-called investigation has involved a series of emails from CAUT to academics affiliated with TW, asking for a chance to interview professors about “the institution’s faith-based practices.”

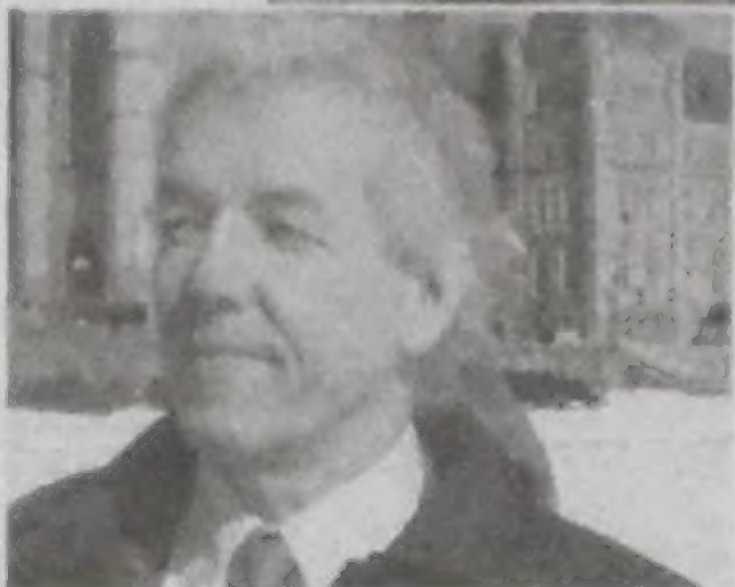
James Turk, executive director of CAUT, says that “this is not about the school being Christian,” but about the faith statement that professors are required to sign. “A university is meant as a place to explore ideas, not to create disciples of Christ,” he argues.

Profs without borders

Trinity Western is 48 years old and has 5,000 graduate and undergraduate students. The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, of which TW is a member, said in a press release that



Above: Jonathan S. Raymond, Ph.D. President, Trinity Western University. Left: James Turk on Parliament Hill.



it has “no reason to believe they suppress academic freedom.”

Al Hiebert, president of Christian Higher Education Canada, calls the investigation harassment, saying that others will take TW less seriously because of CAUT’s accusations. And Jonathan Raymond, president of Trinity Western, is deeply concerned. He was not officially informed about the investigation, and believes “they entered this with a preconceived conclusion.” Raymond calls it anti-Christian discrimination, and fears that his school is under a “cloud of suspicion” because investigations usually assume some degree of wrong-doing.

John G. Stackhouse says that CAUT has raised a crucial issue: whether a Canadian university can expect its faculty to teach and research successfully “within the confines of its confessional statements.” Stackhouse, a Regent College professor of theology, argues yes – that sharing intellectual commitments does not mean academic freedom is being limited. He calls a common Christian worldview the “reinforcing energy of coherent perspectives,” which he believes produces work just as valuable as the scholarship at secular universities. He also points out that secular universities come with their own set of rules, whether spoken or not: the preferences of departmental superiors, for example, the fads of each discipline and the priorities of granting agencies.

Freedom in the Netherlands

“One of the key features of the Dutch education system is freedom of education – freedom to establish schools, determine the principles on which the school is based, and organize classroom teaching. In fact, the Netherlands has one of the oldest national systems based on school choice in the world . . . Each family is entitled to choose the school – public or private – they want, and the state pays.” – excerpted from a World Bank Policy Research paper published in January by Harry A. Patrinos.

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ODDS & TRENDS

The benefits of spanking

GRAND RAPIDS, Michigan – A controversial study out of Calvin College claims that children spanked by their parents become better students and lead happier lives than those who were never spanked. The research, drawn from interviews with over 2,600 people, found that children spanked before the age of six performed better in school, attended university in higher numbers and were more optimistic about life in general.

Marjorie Gunner, a psychology professor at Calvin, led the research; she has two children (and has spanked one). According to *The National Post*, Gunner’s “research is not a green light for parents to spank their children, but rather a red light for those groups who want corporal punishment banned.” Some children need a stronger deterrent than others.

The research, however, has been rejected by two professional journals, including *The Journal of Family Psychology*. It contradicts earlier studies that cite the long-term dangers of spanking, including bad behaviour. Some critics of Gunner’s study think that her Christian beliefs have unduly influenced the findings.

One thing remains clear: the age-old, parental prelude to a paddling that this “will hurt me more than it hurts you” may be true after all.

–Angela Reitsma Bick

Polygamy anyone?

SOUTH AFRICA – President Jacob Zuma married his fifth wife in January, and he is planning to marry a sixth one. Polygamy is not an uncommon practice here. One reader of the daily South African newspaper *The Star* writes in defence of the President:

“Why should President Jacob Zuma and other would-be polygamists not be allowed to practise the age-old custom of taking more than one wife, as did most of the prophets of Scripture?

- Is it not monogamy which
- * Deprives millions of spinsters of securing partners?
- * Causes many married men to stray in order to fulfil their sexual needs which their partners for life are unable to for a variety of reasons?
- * Is an artificial and a colonial relic foisted on the world by the Christian church?
- * Sees many couples spending their lives miserably because the wife has some sort of hold over the husband?

And what of freedom of choice and association? Or would the anti-polygamists rather see the polygamists and others satisfying their sexual desires by curb-crawling to patronise prostitutes?”

I guess the inhabitants of Bountiful, British Columbia, might say Amen to that.

–Bert Witvoet

Life-long faithfulness

TORONTO, Ontario – On February 28, Rev. Repko and Ina Popma will celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary. The couple was married in Barendrecht, the Netherlands, in 1940 (see photo on page 16). Rev. Popma retired in 1979, but he served classis Quinte in Ontario as a relief pastor until 2004, when he was 91 years old. His last sermon was given six years ago, in Dutch, to seniors at Parkside Village in Belleville. At 97, Rev. Popma has been confirmed as the oldest Christian Reformed minister in Canada. Rev. Lambert Doezeema of Kalamazoo, Michigan, is the only older pastor in North America, surpassing Popma by one month.

As members of the Commonwealth, the Popmas are eligible to receive congratulations from Queen Elizabeth II herself, an honour bestowed on 60th, 65th and 70th wedding anniversaries only. Tradition dictates that couples mark their 25th anniversary with silver and the 50th with gold, but reaching 70 years is so rare that “platinum” is a suggestion, not a trend.

The Popmas credit their long marriage to inspiration found in their wedding text of Psalm 37:4. “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart,” and in the words of that wonderful hymn, “Great is thy Faithfulness.”

–Angela Reitsma Bick

